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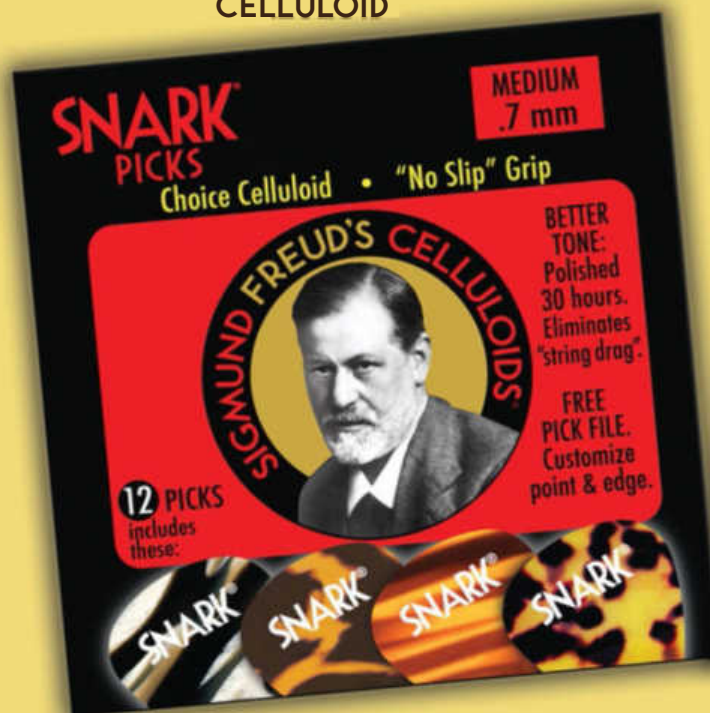
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NOIZE FROM THE EDITOR



IN MY MUSICAL LIFE AS A songwriter, performer, and producer, I run into guitarists all the time who simply can't get anything done. They record tons of tracks, but never finish them. They write thousands of song snippets, but never actually get around to completing a tune. They have hundreds of self-produced CDs in their closets, but never feel like distributing them, marketing them, publicizing them, or selling them. They join bands and then quit. They stay with bands, but never gig. They are

invisible. And yet, they still consider themselves *active* musicians.

Hmmm...

Now, I would never criticize anyone who simply loves playing guitar all by themselves in the privacy of their own little worlds. For these players, it's not about recognition or ego or YouTube views—it's about the joy of playing guitar. While not out in the public eye, many of these quiet guitar fans are still important members of our community. They adore the guitar, they buy gear, they consume guitar music, and they may even read this magazine. In my own experience—which is by no means scientific—most of these people do not complain about not being recognized as awesome guitarists (as that's not why they're into the guitar in the first place),

and, as a result, they seldom talk smack about other players.

Those *other* invisible guys? Well, that's often another story entirely...

Musicians who produce very little tangible art, for whatever reasons, sometimes seem to take out their lack of accomplishment and peer standing on those who actually create work. Admittedly, the product of creation is a "thing" that can therefore be evaluated and lauded or trashed, whereas a "nothing" is but a mystery that cannot be held under a critical microscope, or even, well, *known*. That's good news for those who produce wisps of smoke, of course, because they can attack creators with impunity. In other words, there's no risk of being eviscerated for your musical ideas if those ideas remain locked in your head.

We all realize that guitarists can be pretty unkind to each other. I've discussed it before, and out in the guitar culture, the act of guitar players sniping at other guitar players is practically a pale and boring cliché at this point. But what madness to publicly and meanly disparage the work of others *when you do not produce work yourself*. I'm all for free speech, but this isn't really about that. This is about professional courtesy, and having the grace to keep your mouth politely and mostly shut if you're not in the game.

That's just my opinion—what are your thoughts? Please let me know at mmolenda@nbmedia.com.

PEER COMMENT

What I want to ask anyone who plays guitar professionally and possesses a degree of common sense is, who is behind the Hendrix industry and their relentless attempt to shove down our throats this fantastic myth about a player who was simply a gifted and innovative blues-rock musician for his time and genre as the *unimpeachable, unquestioned greatest guitarist known to the universe*? I don't get it. Bottom line: If this absurd attempt to establish Hendrix as the "greatest" continues on its inexorable path, generations of new players are going to believe that a man who released only four LPs between 1967 and 1970 will represent the gold standard by which all other players—regardless of genre—will be judged by, and that is a sad and tragic commentary on the gullibility of the human species. —MARTIN MOCHA



CUTE PHOTO ALERT!

We have a friendly chipmunk in our backyard that my wife has been featuring in all manner of photos. We happened to have a beat-up old acoustic guitar, so she brought it outside, and the chipmunk immediately went inside it. —BOB KOVACS
[KOVACS IS EDITOR OF ONE OF GP'S SISTER PUBLICATIONS, GOVERNMENT VIDEO.]



MARY ELLEN DAWLEY

Partners in Crime

FIFTY YEARS IN THE MAKING!

Here's my 2015 Epiphone Casino with my first guitar—a 1964 Epiphone Granada E444T. I had to sell a lot of newspapers to get that Granada! Like most of us, I have a few guitars, but these two get the most use because I always leave them out. Even if I only have a few spare minutes, I grab one and play. The '64 has a lot of mojo and a mellowness that comes with age. It is still easy to play, and it's all original, except for the tuners. The Casino is more versatile than the '64, but it has a similar feel. Not necessarily better, but different. It's kind of like comparing Otis Redding to Gary Clark, Jr. —JOE RANDAZZO



In my November 2015 Noize column, I shared my “ghosts”—players whose vibe is always with me when I perform—and I asked the community to reveal their ghosts, as well. Here are some of your answers...

JULIEN BITOUN

Angus Young (the one that started it all for me), **Marc Ribot**, **Jeff Beck**, **George Harrison**, **Ron Thal** (who told me to play anything and not worry about being labeled).

TED ANDREWS

Eddie Van Halen (I liked how he always seemed to be smiling and having a good time).

JOHN PARSONS

Carol Hunter (with Neil Diamond), **James Burton**, **Dickey Betts** (his solos still fill my head whenever I play), **Keith Richards**, **Peter Dinklage**.

GEORGE BRUNER

Keith Richards, **Billy Gibbons**, **Kim Simmonds**, **Steve Marriott**, **Joe Walsh** (I wish I could throw down those licks and be half as funny at the same time).

NICK ATHENS

Zal Cleminson, **Martin Barre**, **Randy California**, **Brian May**, **Al Di Meola**, **Franco Mussida**, and vocalists such as **Ofra Haza** and **Om Khalsoum** (they way they phrase lyrics can be adapted to guitar solos to really make things stand out).

WALTER ENSOR

Jim Messina (after hearing him, I knew I was going to play a Fender), **Cha Burnz**, **Larry Carlton**, **Danny Gatton** (it was like there was a wire plugged into his head from a place I have yet to discover), **Robben Ford**.

BAND OF GHOSTS

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Opening Shots



ETHAN MILLER / GETTY IMAGES

Digging In

Vintage Trouble guitarist Nalle Colt (left, shown with charismatic vocalist Ty Taylor) is getting raves for his organic tones, slashing grooves, and thrilling staccato solos. The hard-charging Hollywood-based R&B group has opened arena tours for AC/DC, the Who, Lenny Kravitz, and Bon Jovi.



Riffs

Malina Moyer GETS FUNKY

BY JOYCE KUO

THE QUEEN OF ENGLAND, THE ROCK AND ROLL HALL OF Fame, and a pro football game don't seem to have anything in common, but they've all experienced the electrifying, Hendrix-esque performances of lefty Strat-slinging guitarist Malina Moyer. In 2010, Moyer appeared in front of 80,000 football fans at a Vikings/Cowboys game, and became the first African-American woman to interpret the National Anthem on electric guitar at a professional sporting event. Two years later, she joined the Experience Hendrix Tour, played Chuck Berry's "Stop and Listen" at a Rock and Roll Hall of Fame tribute concert to the legend, and performed "God Save the Queen" for Queen Elizabeth's 60th Jubilee celebration at the Goodwood Festival of Speed.

The hard-working guitarist has also had a lot of red-carpet moments (including several "Best Dressed at the Grammys" nods by various media), been sought out for music documentaries (such as *Stratmaster: The Greatest Story Ever Told*), and was named "Queen of Funk Rock" on the January 2015 cover of *Asia's* top guitar magazine, *Gitar Plus*. Her latest album, *Rock and Roll Baby* [WCE/BDG/RED], features an impressive take on Hendrix's "Foxy Lady," as well as a funkified collaboration with Bootsy Collins entitled "K-yotic."

Quite literally born to a musical family, Moyer fought early to play the guitar in a manner that felt comfortable and right.

"My mom says her water broke when she was performing onstage, and I was born soon after," says Moyer. "Then, when I was six, my dad put a guitar in my hand, and I totally wasn't feeling it. So when he left the room, I took that right-handed guitar, flipped it upside down, and said, 'Now, this works!' He said, 'Malina, that is so backwards.' But it just felt right, and I started learning to play that way."

What's your current gear setup?

My main axe is a custom Fender Strat with a left-handed body





MARCO VAN ROOIJEN

and a right-handed headstock. I use really light Dean Markley strings—an .008 set—because I really want control of my attack and dynamics when playing lead. But I have to compensate with certain pickups so that the strings don't sound too thin. I currently have a DiMarzio Virtual Vintage Blues in the bridge position and a DiMarzio True Velvet in the neck. Those pickups make the sound warmer. I use a Fender Hot Rod DeVille 212 amp, because I like clean, simple, and crisp sounds—especially when it comes to my rhythm playing. That amp kicks and stays true to the sound. It's just an amazing amp.

How do you approach songwriting?

I think good songwriting comes down to being real, simplicity,

and great stories. You can't just go, "I'm going to write this hit." It's more like, "I have to get this off my chest. This is what it is." I like to write about the truth—whether it's my truth or someone else's truth. I'm both a teacher and a person who learns from life. My job is to pay attention, and to be a vessel to write it out.

What moves you musically?

It's when you hear a vocalist, and you say, "Oh my God, that's Michael Jackson!" It's having that instantly recognizable signature sound. So for me, as a guitar player, I want people to say, "Yeah, that's Malina. I can tell from the way she's playing that lick, because no one can play it like that!" 🎸



Robert Randolph

KEVIN MAZUR

My Top Five Robert Randolph

BY DEVON ALLMAN

PEDAL-STEEL AND SLIDE MASTER ROBERT RANDOLPH HAS jammed with Eric Clapton, Carlos Santana, and many other guitar-playing titans while touring the world with his band, Robert Randolph and the Family Band. His performances are blistering, and his onstage charisma is truly a sight to behold. I have known Robert for a couple of years now, and we have shared licks onstage and beers offstage. Many consider him to be one of the best cats around. I caught up with Robert during a day off from a tour to find out who his top five favorite guitarists of all time are and why.

STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN

"He is the most soulful guitar player of all time," says Robert. "He transcends the blues, and sends the blues into another galaxy."

JIMI HENDRIX

"He is the most influential guitar player of all time, from not only the guitar playing, but also his songwriting and singing. He kept everyone interested because of the unique dialogue he created with his guitar, as well as the dialogue within his songs."

DUANE ALLMAN AND DICKEY BETTS


"It's weird, but you have to put these two together as one, because that is what they did with their playing. They created a sound that became a staple for twin guitars playing together and really speaking to each other. Everybody has tried to copy what they did, but it's never really the same."

ERIC CLAPTON

"I have to put Clapton in there, because, probably more than all the other guitar players, he still continues to make great music throughout his career—whether it's with Cream, Derek and the Dominoes, the Yardbirds, or solo. There are just all these classic riffs and songs that you think are just so easy to copy, but when you try, they just aren't the same. He is just one of those one-of-a-kind players."

BO DIDDLEY

"I think Bo should round out my list, because he created a rhythmic style that really ended up becoming rock and roll. There would not have been a Rolling Stones if it were not for Bo Diddley, and likewise for many other bands. People try to peg him as only a blues artist, but he was a rock and roll cat all the way, and in it's purest form."

Devon Allman's uncle was the legendary Duane Allman, and his father is a howling soul singer and organist. Together, they started a little group called The Allman Brothers Band back in 1969. Devon has been touring and making records for more than a decade, has released eight albums (picking up a Blues Music Award along the way), and has racked up nearly 30 countries on his touring resume. He gets to rub shoulders with guitar players all over the world, and he likes to ask these musicians about their favorite players because it breaks the ice and presents some common ground. 



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MARTIN BARRE ON JETHRO TULL'S CHANGES & PLAYING IN FRONT OF JIMMY PAGE

THE IMAGE OF IAN ANDERSON standing on one leg while playing some fleet-fingered flute is forever associated with Jethro Tull. So much so, it overshadows the exceptional guitarist in Tull's lineup: Martin Barre. When Tull folded in 2014, Barre was free to pursue music with a much heavier emphasis on the 6-string—which is exactly what he did on his solo album, *Order of Play* [Edifying Records] that features live, “one take” reworkings of Tull classics. It also triggered some memories, such as the 1970-1971 period when Led Zeppelin and Tull were both recording at Island Studios, London.

“We’d locked ourselves away in the studio—us doing *Aqualung*, and them working on *Led Zeppelin IV*—and I hadn’t seen Jimmy Page at all,” explains Barre. “Finally, he walked into the control room to say hello, just as I was

recording the solo to ‘Aqualung.’ Now, in those days, if you didn’t get a guitar solo in one or two takes, it might become a flute solo. It was, ‘Go in there and do it or else.’ And here was Jimmy waving like mad—‘Hey, Martin!’—and I’m thinking, ‘I can’t wave back, or I’m going to blow the solo!’”

Barre also believes the early Jethro Tull rhythm section of bassist Glenn Cornick and drummer Clive Bunker could have had a longer tenure in the band.

“I think that every change we made wasn’t necessarily for the better,” he admits. “I’m a great advocate of ‘If it ain’t broke, it doesn’t need fixing.’ It’s too easy to think you need the best virtuoso players in your band, but I look for personality as much as musicality.”

— GREG PRATO

ANNE LEIGHTON



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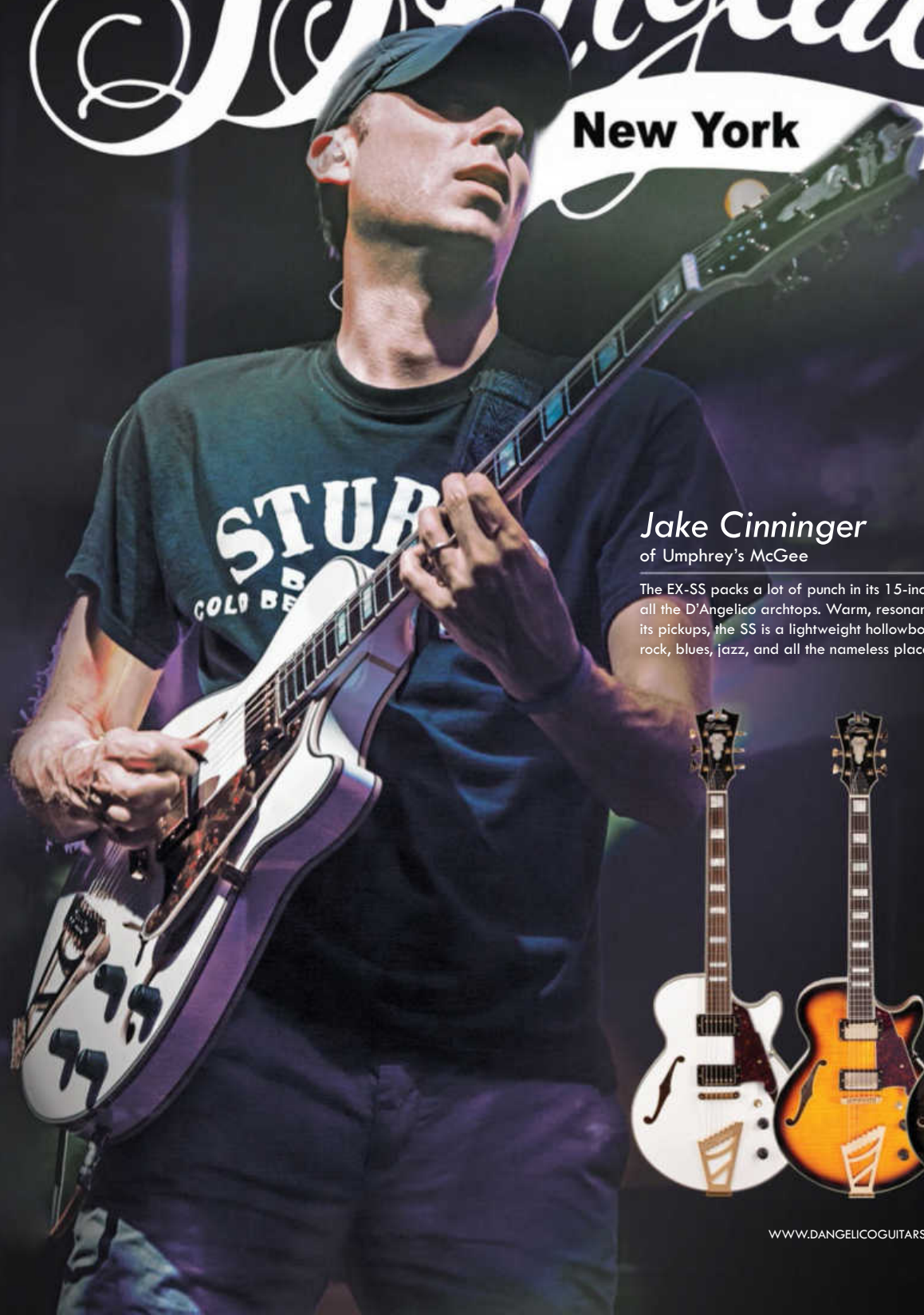


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Jake Cinninger
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Riffs



KEIJARENS

Ziggy Marley

“WHAT MY DAD TAUGHT ME ABOUT GUITAR”

BY MICHAEL MOLENDAA

THIS PAST FEBRUARY 6, 2015, BOB Marley would have been 70 years old. The Jamaican reggae legend passed away from cancer on May 11, 1981, and Jamaica held a series of anniversary celebrations this year to honor the musician. His son, Ziggy, continues to evolve the Marley family legacy with his own albums (the latest being *Fly Rasta* on Tuff Gong Worldwide), comic books (2011's *Marijuanaman*), children's books (2014's *I Love You Too*), and a line of food products through Ziggy Marley Organics.

How did your father influence you as a guitarist?

What I take from him is that you must love your guitar. It must live with you, and be around you all the time. It must be a part of you. His guitar was always around.

Did you develop any of your own concepts about tone or technique from him?

Yeah. I emulate his own style of playing rhythm guitar—which is very meaty and

chunky. It was heavy. What I like about his tone is it had more body and more grit than any other rhythm guitarists that I'd heard. The form of the way he played, it was not like from the wrist—it was almost his whole hand. There was a lot of attack there.

Was he someone who was super concerned about guitar gear?

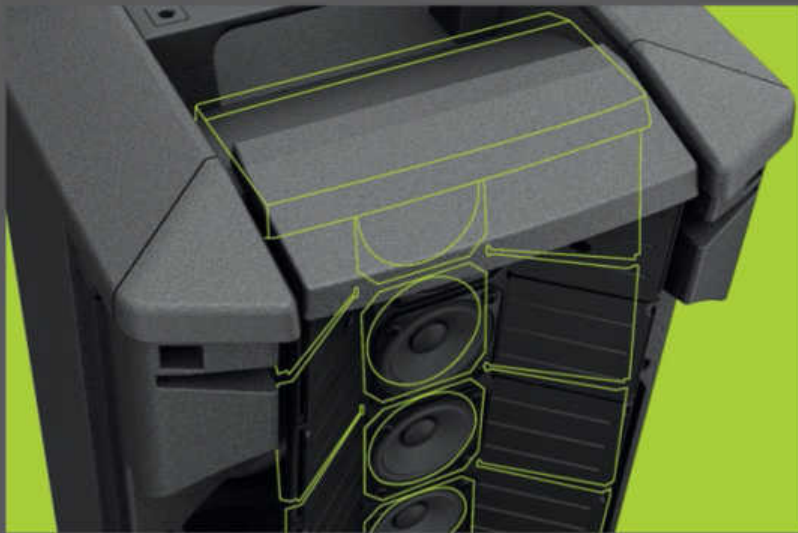
He worked with Family Man [Wailers bassist Aston Barrett] to get the tone. Those guys worked it all out together to get what he liked. Tone was very important to him, but he really wasn't into effects or nothing like that. It was just the tone from the Fender Twin Reverb amplifier and his guitar. He would get the treble and the mids and the bass at the right place, and that's it really. He wasn't a gear head or nothing like that.

Is it difficult to focus on music with so much going on in your life—the family business, the books, the organic food company, and so on?

No. Everything is connected. Just living life, experiencing life with my kids, going out and doing things—it helps the music and everything I do. You meet new people and interact with different types of people—whether it's music or the books or my food thing—and everything opens my mind. These different experiences help me grow as a person, and that helps my music to grow, because it's all about life. My music is life. ■

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Eddie Lang

EXCLUSIVE!
AN EXCERPT FROM THE NEW BOOK,
EARLY BLUES: THE FIRST STARS
OF BLUES GUITAR

The Lonnie Johnson- Eddie Lang Duets

BY JAS OBRECHT

DURING THE 1920s, LONNIE JOHNSON EMERGED AS the decade's most gifted and influential blues guitarist. Time and again, his uncanny dexterity, sophisticated sense of harmony, and brilliant solos enabled him to play in a wide variety of settings. He recorded classic jazz with Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington, groundbreaking guitar duets with Eddie Lang, field-holler blues with Alger "Texas" Alexander, and plenty of blues, ballads, hokum, and pop under his own name.

Johnson's prewar 78s were especially popular among African-American record buyers.

"Lonnie Johnson has never been recognized as one of

the transcendental people who influenced *everybody*," says Ry Cooder. "You can recognize Lonnie Johnson in just about anybody, with his voice and elegant style. The stuff he did with Louis Armstrong is just incredible. What he must have sounded like to country black people! They must have thought, 'Well, this is somebody else.' He's uptown, getting this fabulous tone, and he's very elegant and top-hatted. It's a whole other thing. Pop music, really. You can see people copying him right and left. Oh, it's amazing."

Gifted with strong hands, a great touch, and a wonderfully fertile imagination, Lonnie Johnson could make his guitar

In this photo taken around the time of the Johnson-Lang duets, Johnson holds a 12-string guitar that was probably built by New Orleans luthier Rene Grunewald.



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THE LONNIE JOHNSON-EDDIE LANG DUETS

thump like a country blues starvation box or comp-and-fill like a piano. His crisp rhythms reveal a vast chord vocabulary, and his solos provide textbook examples of flawless articulation and superlative string bends. He had a way of beginning and ending songs with distinctive chord climbs, and with his brilliant right-hand technique and one-of-a-kind left-hand vibrato, he could approximate the sounds of a mandolin or bottlenecked guitar. Long, beautiful solos spooled out of him, conveying a sense that his hands were hardwired to his very heart and soul. Few guitarists—then or now—have achieved such an instantly recognizable style.

In November 1928, Johnson—who'd launched his recording career three years earlier—and Eddie Lang began the collaborations that led to a series of guitar duets that would exert a profound influence on jazz guitar, then in its formative stage. The idea to team Lang, a studio sharpshooter who understood harmony better than any other jazz guitarist of the era, and Johnson, who had the finest technique in blues, originated with T.J. Rockwell, artist manager for Okeh Records. To mask the fact that the 26-year-old Lang was white, the labels on the American releases of their original 78s credited "Lonnie Johnson and Blind Willie Dunn." Across the Atlantic, where there was a less-defined "race" market, Parlophone and Odeon correctly credited the sides to Ed Lang and Lonnie Johnson.

The son of Italian immigrants, Lang was born Salvatore Massaro in 1902, and grew up in South Philadelphia. As a child he studied violin. His father, a luthier, crafted his first guitar, which Eddie taught himself to play. He developed quickly, and by high school was playing duets with his lifelong friend, violinist Joe Venuti. In 1924, Lang had made his first notable recordings, "Tiger Rag" and "Deep Second Street Blues," with the Mound City Blue Blowers, essentially a white version of a jug band. Many sessions followed, and Lang became the top studio guitarist in New York City. By 1927, he'd recorded with Norman Clark, Irving Kaufman, Red Nichols and His Five Pennies, Bix Biederbecke, Frankie Trumbauer, and many others. Venuti and Lang had also recorded their first of several violin-guitar jazz duets. Lang also made many solo guitar records under his own name, a standout being his knuckle-busting



To mask Lang's race, Okeh Records renamed him "Blind Willie Dunn" on the American releases of several Lang-Johnson duets.

arrangement of Rachmaninoff's "Prelude." On record after record, Lang proved himself a master of articulation, harmony, and tone.

At the time of Lang's ascendancy in jazz, most band rhythm sections featured a banjo player rather than a guitarist, largely due to the unamplified guitar's lack of volume on the bandstand. Lang had the skill and knowledge to bring the acoustic guitar to the forefront of the mix.

George Van Eps, who knew Eddie Lang, told *Guitar Player* in 1983: "It's very fair to call Lang the father of jazz guitar. Who did he have to listen to? He had to develop his individuality by himself. His sound came from inside his head. Eddie didn't have anyone to copy. It always annoys me that Eddie is compared to players who came after him. It's terrible. Eddie was very progressive, and if he had lived longer than his short thirty years, he would have been as modern as tomorrow. He was a natural talent who made love to his guitar instead of beating it to death, which is what most guitarists tried to do. Banjo players *had* to switch to the guitar after hearing Eddie. There were a bunch of die-hards who tuned the guitar like a banjo, but he forced the issue and changed the sound of rhythm section."

In the months leading up to his first collaborations with Johnson, Lang had recorded with a variety of blues singers, sometimes displaying Johnson's influence. A few months after Johnson had recorded

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THE LONNIE JOHNSON-EDDIE LANG DUETS



Lonnie Johnson

Johnson's first publicity photo, circa 1926.

with Alma Henderson, for instance, Lang showcased his string-bending finesse on her "You Can't Have It Unless I Give It to You." Other dates found him paired with African-American blues singers such as Victoria Spivey, Eva Taylor, and Gladys Bentley, whose "How Much Can I Stand?" and "Wild Geese Blues" foreshadowed the style of playing Lang would use to accompany Johnson.

It's uncertain when or where the two guitarists first met, but on November 15, 1928, they both played on Texas Alexander's "Work Ox Blues" and "The Risin' Sun." With Lang flat-picking chords and rhythmic figures beneath Johnson's heartfelt 12-string soloing, they displayed an easy musical camaraderie. Two days later, Johnson and Lang cut their first pair of guitar duets at the Okeh studio in New York City. Lang reportedly played his new Gibson L5 6-string archtop, while Johnson used the 12-string he'd bought in San Antonio, Texas, eight months earlier. They jumpstarted the session with the energetic "Two Tone Stomp," with Eddie's complex bass lines and flawless chords supporting Lonnie's bluesy, happy melody—dig Johnson's fast triplets!

Johnson began their slower, 12-bar "Have to Change Keys to Play These Blues" with a storytelling solo while Lang played bass notes and chords. Midway through, they

briefly exchanged roles, Johnson strumming support beneath Lang's lower-register solo. As Dan Lambert noted in *The Guitar in Jazz: An Anthology* [University of Nebraska Press, 1966], Lang's solo is "note for note the same break, though transposed, that he later played on Louis Armstrong's 'Knockin' a Jug.' Lonnie's playing here is very loose, very 'off the cuff'—lots of smooth, bluesy flatted-third bends and descending chromatic scales. His guitar sustains nicely, giving his playing a distinctly human, singing tone. Lang's break, on the other hand, seems perfectly conceived and tight, and so the styles contrast to good effect—Lang's polished gem in the middle of Johnson's funk. The string bends in this tune are also of interest: Lonnie bends notes to make them 'cry,' wringing every last drop of emotion from a note, while Eddie bends notes to give them a slightly 'off,' out-of-tune sound. Lonnie's is the more emotional (bluesy) approach, Eddie's an intellectual (jazzy) approach."

On most of their subsequent duets, Lang would focus on the rhythm role, supporting Johnson with innovative bass lines, arpeggios, natural and artificial harmonics, and a variety of extended, altered, and inverted chord voicings.

In March 1929, Lang and Johnson were both called in to accompany Louis Armstrong and his band. Lang went first, playing alongside Jack Teagarden and others on "I'm Gonna Stomp, Mr. Henry Lee." For the next two numbers, Armstrong brought in a new team of musicians, including Johnson on guitar, Eddie Condon on banjo, Pops Foster on string bass, and Paul Barbarin on drums. Everyone but Condon was originally from New Orleans, and they raised the hometown spirit on "Mahogany Hall Stomp." Johnson delivered a superlative solo. As Larry Cohn, producer for Columbia Records, describes: "On this record, Lonnie Johnson was playing 12-string guitar in a large band context as cleanly as one could possibly envision. Charlie Christian was fantastic, but Lonnie Johnson was doing it ten years before. He was a jazz musician nonpareil."

At their next session together, on May 2, Lang and Johnson were joined by King Oliver on clarinet, J.C. Johnson on piano, and Hoagy Carmichael, who added percussion. The leisurely paced instrumental "Jet Black Blues"

Continued on page 140



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Bottling Up the Lightning

JOHN SCOFIELD'S *PAST PRESENT* IS AN OBJECT LESSON IN HOW TO RECORD A GREAT JAZZ ALBUM

BY JUDE GOLD

“YOU CAN’T REALLY RECREATE ANYTHING, UNFORTUNATELY,” SAYS JOHN Scofield. “You can have a great moment of inspiration at home practicing on your couch, but recreating that same magic later in the studio is difficult to do. In fact, you might not even be able to recreate it the next moment on your *couch*.”

The good news, according to Scofield, is that in that next moment, something *else* will happen.

“When you believe in that and trust in that, you’re way ahead of the game,” says the New York guitarist. He learned the power of trusting in each musical moment

from a true legend of jazz—Miles Davis, with whom he performed and recorded extensively in the early ’80s.

“I feel like there’s a before-Miles me and an after-Miles me,” says Scofield. “I idolized him so much, that when he told me, ‘You sound good,’ it meant everything to me. And one thing Miles really believed in was spontaneity, and trying to capture it. All those old jazz guys, man, they really knew about that—about how spontaneity is the essence of the music. They knew that it’s the off-the-cuff sort of approach that inspires music from our subconscious, and that that’s the best stuff—the fresh stuff you get when you’re not just playing hot licks.”

Bursting with exactly this sort of off-the-cuff “fresh stuff” is Scofield’s new quartet album, *Past Present* [Impulse!]. The record reunites Scofield with two players with whom he has enjoyed great

musical spontaneity over the years, including on his celebrated early-’90s quartet albums on Blue Note records—drummer Bill Stewart and tenor saxophonist Joe Lovano. The album is also a reminder that, as Scofield learned decades ago from bassist/composer Steve Swallow, jazz gets even deeper if you are more than just a great instrumentalist.

“It turns out you can really make a personal thing out of jazz if you write music, too,” says Scofield, who composed all nine tunes on *Past Present*. “I’ve been writing since my 20s, when Steve started encouraging me to compose. A lot of my favorite jazz players are people like Monk and Wayne Shorter—guys who deliver great compositions on their records.”

So, you’re putting the band back together, huh?

Yeah, for this record—and we’re doing

a big tour, too. I actually had many of the tunes written three years ago, and when I wrote them I was thinking “jazz record,” but then I did *Überjam Deux*, instead, which is a much more electric kind of thing. For these tunes, though, I thought, “Well, who am I going to record them with? Why don’t I get the best sax player and drummer I can think of?”

So, I chose Joe Lovano and Bill Stewart—not because I played with them a bunch in the ’90s, but simply because they are my favorite cats. The only difference between the original lineup and now is that we have Larry Grenadier on bass instead of Dennis Irwin, who passed away from cancer in 2008. With these guys, it’s not just how we play individually, it’s the way we play together as a group. We really listen to each other and play off each other.

But all great jazz musicians do that, don’t they? And you’ve played with a lot of great musicians.

I have, but there are some who actually *don’t* listen that much. In this group, we’ve developed a sound together. We’ve put in so many hours playing together that we know how each other plays, and we have this place that we can go to. I love that. It’s harder to develop that sort of





chemistry nowadays, because everybody, including myself, is doing special projects all the time. Promoters don't want you to show up with the same group time after time. They always want to construct special bills and lineups for you.

How did you present the songs to your band?

I wrote out the music lead-sheet style—melody with chord symbols, and maybe an occasional bass line or harmony part. This time, though, I didn't give out the hand-written charts. I gave those to a copyist who ran them through Sibelius, so we had lead sheets that were really nice.

I like you how you have fun with the blues form on the title track, "Past Present."

One thing that defines that song is the bass line—which I did write out—because it doesn't start on the root. It starts on the 6 and then climbs up. First, Larry and I are playing the line in unison, and then we drift off of it, but the bass keeps referring to it. This gives the song a different kind of propulsion and vibe, although it's

still just a 4/4 swing tune.

You also create cool splashes of harmony in the head by having the guitar and sax diverge from each other in interesting ways.

The guitar part is the main melody. Joe's part is the harmony, and the way I come up with harmony parts, being that we're in modern times, is that I loop the main melody using my Boomerang Phrase Sampler—slower than the performance tempo, on a song like this! Then, I can mess around with different harmonies against it. On this song, I created the harmony half by ear, and half scientifically—you know, by thinking, "I could employ a little counterpoint here, or follow in thirds there," etc.

Unlike the *Überjam* records, which feature a good amount of effects and Boomerang usage, this record sounds like you're just using a straight ahead guitar/cable/amp setup.

You're absolutely right. The guitar is an Ibanez AS200 like the sunburst one I

usually play—but it's an old one the company gave me in 1986. It now has a pair of Voodoo humbuckers in it, which sound cool. And the cables I use are Vovox, from Switzerland. They're really high quality, and do seem to sound a little more hi-fi than regular cords.

The amp on the record is a '64 Deluxe Reverb I bought about ten years ago at a music store in New York. I liked the way it sounded, but noticed it was really soft. Then, it just sort of died. I took it to a repairman, and he said, "This thing has been in a flood. You're screwed." I thought, "Oh, man," and it sat in my basement for a few years. Then, last year, I brought it to a different guy for a second opinion. He replaced the transformer with another vintage one of the same type. Now, the amp is up and running and sounds great. I usually set the volume just above 3, for a touch of breakup. Fender's reissue Deluxes are good, too, by the way. Rounding things out are D'Addario Standard heavy [celluloid] picks, and D'Addario strings gauged

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It sounds like that, but actually the drums were in a separate room from the rest of us. They were in a huge booth at Carriage House, the studio in Connecticut where we recorded.

Is it at all weird to play jazz with the drummer behind double glass?

Well, at first we tried it with everyone in the same room, but the drums just didn't sound as good that way. Bill said, "It's going to sound better in the booth," so we did that and used headphones. All of us have done that so much that it wasn't a problem. Even Rudy Van Gelder had a drum booth at his famous studio in New Jersey. His place was a huge room with high ceilings, and when I recorded there, the drums were in this big box that was open on the top and had windows on four walls. Plus,

you had to use 'phones anyway, because he had the piano covered, and that was the only way to hear it.

Some of the song titles on *Past Present*, such as "Get Proud" and "Enjoy the Future!" are catchphrases from your son Evan, who succumbed to cancer two years ago. How much, if any, of this album is a tribute to Evan?

To tell you the truth, when I write music, I don't ever write with any idea other than the music itself. So, it's more that I was writing during the time when Evan was undergoing treatment, and a lot of the songs remind me of that time, so that's where some of the titles came from. I wanted to honor Evan, yet I almost feel weird including him in the publicity, because I'm not trying to score points with anybody over what happened. There's no "Tears in Heaven" on this record. It's jazz. It's about the music.

I'm sure that even on an off night, most fans seeing you and Joe Lovano trade solos

are blown away. But what constitutes a really good musical performance for you?

It's hard to know. First of all, musicians probably aren't the best judges of their own performances. Maybe you're totally grooving on the way you played, but it doesn't actually sound any better to somebody else. Or, maybe you think, "I wish I'd done such-and-such differently," and you get hung up on that, but actually the whole night was a lot better than you thought.

One thing I've found is that any time you have a bad night, it pretty much guarantees the next night will be pretty good. And any time you have a great night, it kind of guarantees that the next night won't live up to that. After a great night, you might be thinking, "I'm there! I'm going to be a music master for the rest of my life." But then you're crushed back down to reality at the next gig. And you just have to accept it. Everything changes in life. I think we get better slowly, and don't notice it. 📀

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The New Normal

ALEXI LAIHO TRANSCENDS CHAOS

BY MATT BLACKETT

"I'VE COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT THE LESS YOU THINK ABOUT IT, THE BETTER THE OUTCOME IS.

This is our ninth studio album, and it's not easy to keep the music fresh and genuine sounding. If I start wondering if fans are going to like a song or how they might react, it'll throw me off track. It's not like I don't care. Of course I care. But I just do whatever comes naturally and hope for the best. I hope that people like it."

This M.O., as articulated by Children of Bodom guitarist and leader Alexi Laiho, is working out pretty well for the Finnish melodeath metal band. Since the band's inception in the early '90s, Laiho and company have seen bigger and bigger tours, an ever-growing fanbase, and more and more accolades for the skills of their guitar hero frontman.

The band took a hit three days before the recording of their latest, *I Worship Chaos* [Nuclear Blast], when longtime guitarist Roope Latvala left the band, forcing them to record as a quartet for the first time. The Bodom kids didn't let it throw them, however, because the results are as heavy as ever, as evidenced by the Randy Rhoads-approved rhythm lines and blazing solos on every track. Laiho spoke to *GP* from his native Finland, fatigued after a long day of pre-tour press, but psyched to talk guitars, techniques, and what it takes to survive in the new musical world order.

This album was recorded as a four-piece and that's a new thing for you. How did that influence the making of this album?

Musically, it didn't really make any difference at all, because I wrote all the riffs. If anything, I think the guitars turned out a lot tighter, so at least something good came out of it. Basically we parted ways with our guitar player three days before, so there was no other choice than for me to do all the guitars.

Did it throw the vibe at all, having a bandmember leave three days before tracking?

Of course it was pretty messed up, but we didn't really have any time to talk about it. We figured we'd make the album and talk about it later. You can't just sit down and cry about it. You've got to do what you got to do. If anything, it kind of pushed the rest of us closer together and made everybody work extra hard.

Watching you play the intro to the title track, "I Worship Chaos," I was really struck by how relaxed and

loose your picking hand is. How important is staying relaxed for your rhythm playing and your lead playing?

It's really important. That's how you control the tone and that's how you control everything. You can control what the whole song sounds like. If you're too tense, there's no room for any dynamics or anything. Keeping your right hand loose all the time and then emphasizing certain notes, like every fourth note, gives it a groove and a pulse. I try to do the same thing in solos.

The riff in "Morrigan" contains some surprising notes. There's a major 7 in there, and some cool chromatic notes. Can you describe how you come up with a riff like that?

Honestly, I just kind of do it without thinking about anything. I jam with the riff at first—the rhythm part of the riff—and then I start messing around with the harmonies a little bit. I add small details here and there, which makes a difference. You're talking about the pre-chorus, which is in *B* minor, but all of a sudden I throw



Features

ALEXI LAIHO

in a G minor instead of G major. I guess the G major would be the normal thing to do, but to me, the G minor just makes it sound a little bit more evil.

You get a lot of midrange in your sound, and that's something that was very uncommon in metal for a long time. Can you talk a little bit about your relationship with mids?

I think it comes from the fact that I grew up listening to a lot of '80s metal. For example, with the Ozzy guys—Randy Rhoads and Jake E. Lee—it was all about midrange. That guitar tone always sounded best to me. When I started understanding something about amplifiers, I wanted to crank up the mids to make the guitar stick out a little bit more at band practice—be a little bit clearer. The more midrange you have, the more unforgiving the sound is in a way. It makes you practice harder.

I think it lends a real clarity to your lowered tunings. With too much low end and the mids all notched out, it's hard to hear

the low B. I really hear your B string.

I know what you mean. It gets all muddy and fuzzy otherwise. I go for a lot of midrange and not that much gain. A lot of it is the way you play, too. I hate a muddy sound. I just can't stand it. To me, dialing in a lot of mids has always made sense. It's also a little different from what a lot of other bands do. Even though we're a death metal band, the guitars definitely have an '80s sound to them.

How did you get that tone? What was your rig for this album?

I played Marshall JVMs, like I did for the previous album. But up until then, I recorded every album except the first one with this really old Lee Jackson preamp, which is basically *all* midrange. That's all you get out of it, whether you like it or not. I recorded everything with that. I switched to Marshall initially because the Lee Jackson kept breaking and I wanted to try something new. With the Marshall, I could get that midrange but I could still add as much low end as I wanted.

Now, I can't honestly picture myself playing anything else.

Which channel on the JVM do you use?

I use the Crunch channel, which has a clearer sound, a meaner sound. When I would double certain rhythm parts I would sometimes use the Ultra channel, but mainly I'll use the Crunch one.

Do you use that for both your rhythm parts and your solos?

Yeah, it's pretty much the same tone. If I find one really cool sound that I'm super comfortable with, I don't really need anything else. I do have a gain boost built inside the guitar that's always on, so, sometimes on certain parts, I'll take the gain boost off. But it's mainly just one sound and that's it. For my live setup, I have a little chorus on all the time and then I have a wah pedal, but that's it.

Do you really have a little bit of chorus on your tone at all times?

Yeah, definitely. That's part of my '80s fetish. All the bands that I grew up listening

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to had chorus on all the time, so to me it was super cool. I use the Boss Super Chorus.

You have to sing over some pretty intricate riffs. Was that difficult to learn when you were starting out, singing and playing at the same time?

Yes and no. The thing is, I've been doing it for such a long time that now it just comes out naturally. Way back in the day, when we were 13 or whatever, I just wanted to play guitar and that was it. But nobody wanted to sing. Eventually I said, "Okay, I'll do it then." I got stuck doing the vocals so I learned that as I was learning how to play guitar. The funny thing is, when I do something pretty gnarly with the guitar and sing on top of it, like fast picking or something, that's sometimes actually easier than doing rhythm parts that may sound very simple. But the rhythm riff might be the complete opposite of what I'm singing. What I do is sit down and play the riff slowly and kind of whisper the vocal part on top of it. I start

off slow and then build up the speed a little bit. Then, after 20 minutes or so, I'll pretty much have it down.

You've mastered a bunch of different rhythm and lead techniques over the years. What kind of stuff do you practice these days? What do you find challenging about the guitar?

I'm still not very good at it, but lately I've been working on a lot of fingerpicking and Travis picking. I've been on this Fleetwood Mac kick and Lindsey Buckingham's style is like a whole new world to me. I saw them play live at the L.A. Forum last year and I was blown away. I knew the songs, but I always assumed there were two guitars on a lot of them. But it was just him fingerpicking. So I started practicing that. It's super cool because I get that feeling when I was 13 years old and trying to learn how to do sweep picking for the first time. It's one of those things that I might never use for Children of Bodom, but on some level

I'm sure that it's going to help me write different sorts of riffs.

This is your ninth studio album. You've been at it most of your adult life. What keeps this whole thing fun and interesting for you?

Just playing live and touring. That's the best part of it. I can honestly say that that's reason enough to keep making albums: just so I can get back on the road and play live. We've always been about that. That's the best part of the whole music thing. No matter what's going to happen to the music business, I'm not going to bitch and whine about it. My answer to that whole thing is that if you know how to play your f*cking instrument and if your band knows how to put on a good show, you're always going to be fine. There's nothing to worry about. *Nobody* knows what's going to happen in the music business in the next five years, but I try not to stress about it because I know that we can keep on touring as long as we're alive. I know that. 🇺🇸

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The Art of Second Guitar

RICHARD BENNETT TALKS TWANG AND THE SUPREMACY OF THE SONG

BY MICHAEL ROSS

YOU CAN BE FORGIVEN FOR NOT knowing who Richard Bennett is. The man has made a career of hiding in the shadows while helping others shine. A peek at his recording credits reveals over 100 sessions before you are even out of the Cs. A highly abbreviated list of those he has enabled through tasty guitar and/or production work would include Mark Knopfler, Ringo Starr, Conway Twitty, Sammy Davis, Jr., Johnny Mathis, Roseanne Cash, Emmylou Harris, Rodney Crowell, Waylon Jennings, Smokey Robinson, Gladys Knight, Barbara Streisand, and T-Bone Walker. If nothing else, he produced the two Americana records that helped define modern twang: Steve Earle's *Guitar Town* and Marty Stuart's *Hillbilly Rock*.

Bennett's solo records will remind you why you love guitar, with their pure-toned instrumentals redolent of cowboys riding across a western vista and smoky clubs where people dance to small instrumental combos. This includes his latest, *Contrary Cocktail* [Moderne Shellac], where all the notes are perfect, but none are sterile. From London, on tour with Knopfler, Bennett reveals some tonal secrets and talks about the art of accompaniment.

Is it fair to say Duane Eddy was an influence on this record?

I'm guilty, because it is just so delicious to play like that. I tend to play melodically, and anytime you play a melody on

the fourth string or lower, people invoke Duane Eddy.

Did soundtracks of the '50s through the '70s also influence you?

Of course—we are victims of our birthdate. Soundtrack tunes were popular hits on the radio when I was growing up. Movie themes and instrumentals would chart on the Top 40.

How much of the tracking was done live?

On all my records, I am cutting the tracks live, with bass, drums, and one or two guitars. I might come back and replay it a couple of times. We may also do some comping and a little bit of sweetening. I try to get as much of the vibe as I can on the rhythm date, without having to layer a bunch of stuff on top to make it happen.

There are three other guitar players listed on the record. Did you track with them in various combinations?

I like a couple to go down at once. I could stack guitars myself or get another person to do it, but I don't like how that sounds. I prefer other people's fingerprints on things.

When did you pick up pedal-steel guitar?

I've played it nearly as long as I've played guitar, but have never touted myself as a steel player, particularly since moving to Nashville. Somebody once said, "Another steel player in Nashville is like another hooker in Las Vegas." But I love to play steel.



RICHARD BENNETT

Which pedal-steel records or players influenced “Segue to Sundown?”

The old guys who wrote the book influenced me: Bud Isaacs, Buddy Emmons, and Jimmy Day. I love the real hardcore, basic steel sound, which is a little stiffer and a little woodier than the modern sound.

How do you get such depth on your guitar sound without a lot of reverb or delay?

I don’t play loudly, just enough to hit the mic properly. It’s how you attack the string. Sometimes the easier you attack, the more sound wells up out of it. With Mark, I did these big shows through a little 12-inch Tone

King Imperial combo amp. That’s what PAs and microphones are for.

What amps did you use in the studio?

A lot of the previous album was a ’61 Fender Pro with a single 15. I like amps with a 15-inch speaker because it covers a full range and has a very rich sound. You get plenty of top out of it, and clarity, but you also get a lovely depth. On this album, I used a ’66 blackface Fender Deluxe Reverb and a Polytone Mini-Brute. For a few things, I used a little ’60s Benson amp that my friend, Al Casey, played on a million sessions.

How do you choose keys for your instrumentals?

I think there is something true and pure about staying in the key in your head or staying in the key where you first stumbled across it on the guitar. Often, it won’t be in a normal guitar key. It will be in *E♭*, *B*, or *F*. Other times, it is where it lays best, which, again, is not always a guitar key.

Do you usually start with a melody or chords or both?

90 percent of the time it is a melody, and then I’ll structure the chords around it.

Do you remember which guitar you used on “The Girl Was Northern”?

The first verse of it is a ’56 Gretsch 6120. On the second verse, it goes up an octave and changes to a little Flamenco guitar.

Is that a Tele or a Gretsch on “Tresero”?

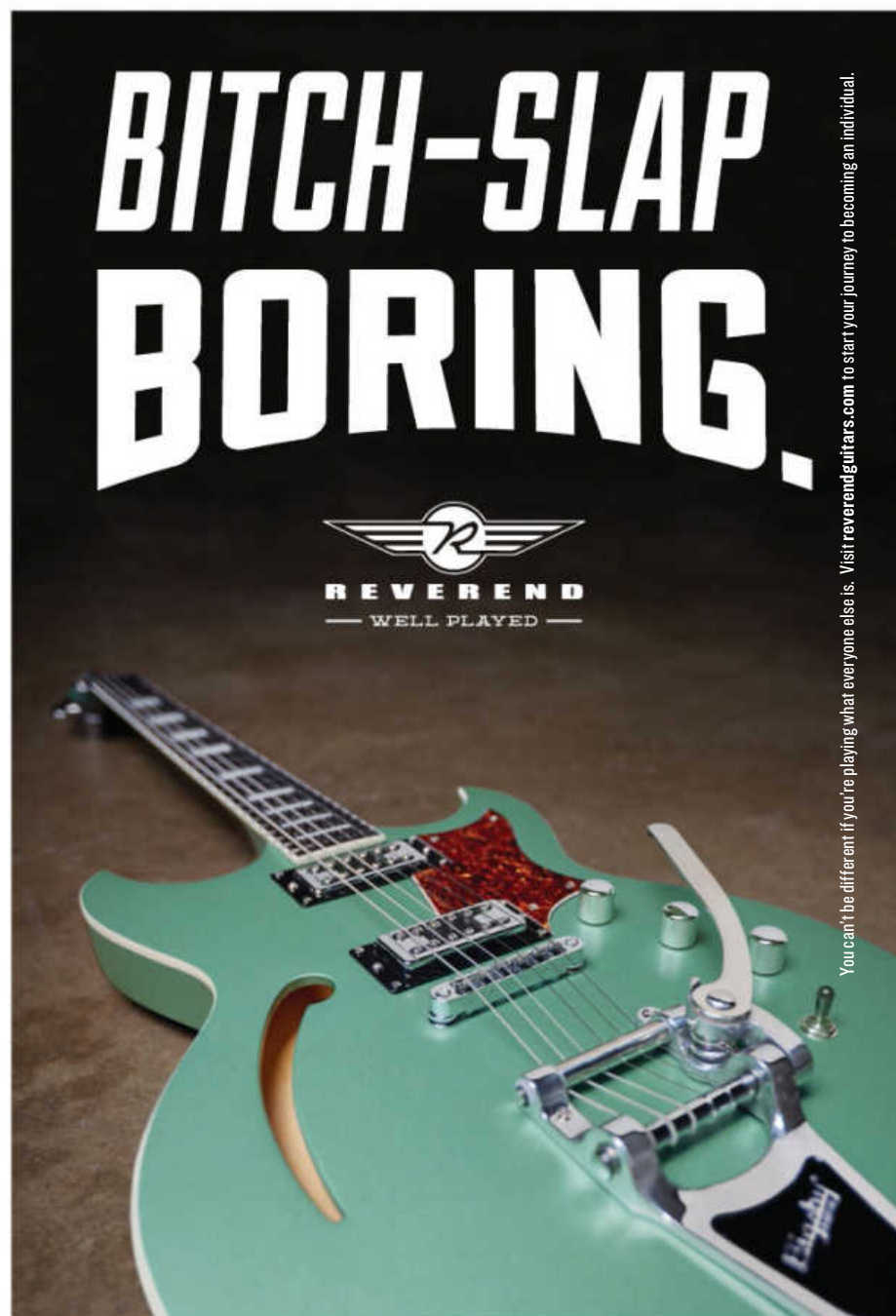
It’s a Gibson ES-330. They are making fabulous reissues in Memphis. My buddy Michael Voltz, who looks after Gibson’s Memphis division, gave me a couple to play around with at home. I ended up dragging the 330 to the studio and using that through the Deluxe Reverb.

Is that a cuatro or a tres playing rhythm?

A tres. “Tresero” is Cuban for somebody who plays a tres. I love playing the tres. I just read the Bert Berns biography. Berns was a fabulous record man in New York in the ’60s who loved Cuban music. If you listen to his songs, like “Twist and Shout,” so many of them are based in Cuban/Latin music combined with New York rock and R&B. I love that stuff and it inspired “Tresero.”

“A Lovely Day to Cry” really has that full jazz guitar sound. Is it an archtop?

I used a mid-’70s, solidbody Gretsch 6121 with a set of flatwound strings. I got the strings about 25 years ago and they are still on there. It gets a beautiful jazz tone. I



had done a version with a proper jazz guitar, but rearranged the tune a bit and decided to use the Gretsch through the Polytone.

Do you use flatwounds on most of your electrics?

I only keep a couple of guitars strung up that way: the 6121, a Fender Duo-Sonic, and an Eastman jazz box. The rest are roundwounds. I'll use whatever is cheap. I think electric guitar strings are slightly over-hyped. There is really more difference in gut strings and nylon strings. There is a company out of Italy called Aquila that makes fabulous things called "nylgut." It is a nylon string that has the stability and the good qualities of nylon with the sonic qualities of real animal gut.

What would you typically bring in terms of guitars, amps, and effects to a Nashville session?

I have a couple of guitar trunks that get delivered for day-to-day session work. One is full of acoustic things from a cavaquinho to a tiple. I carry some sort of a Spanish-style Dobro or Del Vecchio resonator, as well as some Gibson acoustics and some Martin acoustics. I always bring a gut-string.

In the electric box is a Strat, an old Tele, my 6120 Gretsch, a 335, a Danelectro 6-string bass, a Les Paul, and whatever I am enamored with at the moment, like this historic reissue 330. For amps, I have been using a reissue Fender Vibroverb that Marty Stuart gave me, and the Tone King.

I am not an effects guy. My effect is no effect. If one guy is very effected and one guy is organic and clean, it makes a beautiful combination.

What do you use when you are playing on the road with Knopfler?

I have a very simple Benado pedalboard with tremolo, delay, and a very good-sounding overdrive. I also have a volume pedal and a wah-wah pedal. I haven't played wah-wah since the late '70s, and it's fun to get back into it again. A little A/B switch goes between a Vox AC30 and the Tone King amps.

Do you have any tips for playing second guitar?

It's a tricky bill to fill, though not difficult. You just have to listen and be able to support. Don't try to elbow into the spotlight, but don't lie down and play dead either. You need be creative in that role and really contribute something, yet stay out of the way. I think one should always practice their rhythm guitar playing—acoustic and electric—and try

to come up with good little parts and patterns or lines. You are there to serve the song. It's not about you. Even when you have to step up and do a solo, it's not about the guitar playing—it's about the song first.

On some of the earlier records you do beautiful improvised solos. Are you ever

called for that on record dates?

I used to be that guy. I tend to be a rhythm guitar player these days and I'm perfectly happy doing it. It's a very honorable job. Now and again, I will get asked to do solos, but these days they usually call somebody younger and better looking. 🍷

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ACOUSTIC APOCALYPSE

DON ALDER'S GENTLE TRIBUTE TO FLESH-EATING MONSTERS

BY MICHAEL MOLENDRA



IT HAS BEEN FIVE YEARS SINCE DON

Alder won *Guitar Player's* Guitar Superstar 2010 competition with a stunning solo-acoustic performance, surprising charisma (given that he stepped onstage looking like a history teacher), and a pretty hilarious sense of humor. He hasn't stopped blowing minds—he performed a duet of David Bowie's "Space Oddity" with Space Station commander Chris Hadfield last year, for example—and winning awards since.

But for his latest album, Alder took a left turn way off the beaten path for a solo-acoustic guitarist and singer/songwriter that few could have expected—even those well aware of his sense of humor. Apparently, his self-produced *Armed and Dangerous* is an epic song cycle inspired by the zombie apocalypse. Yeah, no touchy-feely odes to mountain sunshine, everlasting love, or butterflies fanning across a gentle breeze in Alder's new world order.

Zombies?

Yes. I had a hard time deciding what I wanted to do for the new album [*laughs*]. But what happened is that I became a big fan of *The Walking Dead* TV series, and this helped guide my project, because I started thinking what it would be like to be a guitar player in apocalyptic times. I would have to have the ultimate warrior guitar to kill off zombies, and that became the theme of the album. I even went to a British artist named Rob Sullivan to design this guitar for the album cover. We put together a guitar that's a fanned-fret instrument

with a blade on the headstock, a chopping knife on the bottom of the body, a chainsaw on the lower bout, and a whammy-bar flamethrower to clear paths, as well as whips and Wolverine claws. This guitar kind of drove some of the songs, and some other songs were directly influenced by *The Walking Dead*. The title track is dedicated to the entire cast, "Boy Meets Girl" is about the show's characters Maggie and Glenn, and "Arrows Will Fly" deals with tough-guy archer, Daryl.

Okay, I get all of that, but I still find it difficult to wrap my head around zombies inspiring acoustic compositions.

Well, these aren't really coffeehouse songs. They are very aggressive compositions that I kind of had in the works anyway, but having the guitar visualized helped everything make sense. "Arrows Will Fly," for example, has this unique, muted circular chicken picking done with three or four fingers that, to me, evokes arrows flying all over the place. "Armed and Dangerous" is about as close as you're going to get one acoustic guitar sounding like a dance mix. I needed something to come right at you out of the gate, so I started with this rhythmic, single-note thing, and then I kicked in with a palm hit on the soundboard. It's very aggressively percussive.

What are your main guitars at the moment?

My favorite guitar right now is a small-body Yamaha AC3R with multiple pickup sources. It has a piezo output, as well as onboard mic modeling, and I also added a Seymour Duncan Mag Mic

FRETS

DON ALDER

in the soundhole. I run the outputs through a Soundcraft Notepad mixer for live performance. For the singer/songwriter stuff, I'll use a larger body acoustic, the Yamaha LL16D. I use Ernie Ball Aluminum Bronze strings. The general consensus is that they have more brightness to them, but I find they're warmer. My little Yamaha is fairly bright-sounding guitar to begin with, but when I put these on, it seems to produce a bit more warmth. Also, the lows are crisp. They're not muddy. I like a fairly low action, so on the AC3R I'll use a .013-.056 set. If I'm ever having buzzing problems, I'll put on heavier strings to try to help the situation. When you travel through different climates with an acoustic, the neck is always changing on you.

How do you keep people engaged throughout an entire solo-acoustic performance?

I don't plan it on paper where I say, "This is exactly what I'm going to do." I mean, I



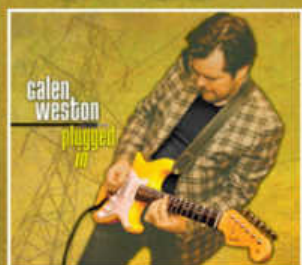
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Bill Milkowski

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get onstage, and everything I planned to say kind of goes by the wayside for one reason or another. But I've learned that one of the biggest factors in getting an audience to buy into your act is to have 100-percent fierce belief in what you're doing. So I mostly go from my gut when I step onstage. I try to be honest about what I am presenting to the audience, and then I just hope for the best.

Well, you've got something going on, because you win a lot of competitions—our Guitar Superstar, Worldwide Guitar Idol, International Fingerstyle Championship, and so on.

I'm always driven by an "I suck" attitude. For me, it has been a long time of justifying, "How the hell can I win this? What I'm doing sucks in comparison to everybody else." But here's where I'm at: I'm not a professional musician. That would require a professional skill set—like Steve Lukather. You can throw ten charts

at him, and he can read them from ten feet away and fly through them. That's not something I can do. Now, the other route is that of the artist, and that path has a certain beauty to it, because you can break all the rules. The big challenge with that direction is that you have to sell yourself to the public if you want a career. You have to make them like you, and that's a whole other challenge. But this is the path I've gone down. You have to read your audience, and then let your fear of failure lead you to the right choices for making that audience happy. You trust in those decisions, and you just play.

Do you ever run up against someone who says, "Hey, Alder, I want to see some technique, man. You're being too much of a showman"?

In the acoustic genre [*laughs*]? Yeah, for sure. It's all about if you can tap, whether you can do this or that... There are two camps, I think. There are the Andy McKee

kind of guitar geek bands, and there are the Tommy Emmanuel. They're quite different because Tommy is more the Chet Atkins kind of school, and Andy is more the Michael Hedges school. So if you're going down either of those tracks, you're always going to be compared to those guys. Of course, you keep your technique up no matter which direction you take. That's a given. But I'll tell you, the hardest thing to do is to come up with fresh new melodies and great songs. It's not easy to be the Beatles. So, once again, when I went into all of these contests against all of these players who were technically so much better than me, and far more virtuosic, my tactic was to find my own magic onstage. If you can connect with the audience—have a conversation with the people out there—then it doesn't really matter how good you are at that point. You've found that "X Factor." And you're going to win. ■



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REVIEW

MEET 5 MÉRIDA ACOUSTICS!

TESTED BY GIULIA FERRARIS



Alcazaba
A17-DCES



Diana DG15-
FOGACES

STARTED A LITTLE MORE THAN TEN years ago, Mérida Extrema guitars have been selling well in Europe and Japan. Recently, the China-manufactured line debuted in America, and the company opened a U.S. headquarters in Connecticut, where final quality control, inspection, and setup are done. Mérida offers a lot of different models in its Alcazaba, Cardenas, Diana, and Milagros series instruments, so it's definitely worth a visit to the company's website to see all the choices. We were sent five guitars—a steel-string from each of the four series, as well as a classical model—and all of them displayed

beautiful craftsmanship, excellent finishes, and very good fretwork. In addition, all models felt comfortable, and were easy to play. Each guitar came in a hardshell case with a tasteful weave pattern, and a humidifier was included.

ALCAZABA A17-DCES

With its vine fretboard inlay, art-deco-like headstock, and spiral rosette, this dreadnought cutaway is very easy on the eyes. When strummed acoustically at low to medium volumes, the A17-DCES sounds warm with a subtle crispness in the mid-range. Bash it like a rocker, however, and

the mids became a bit too compressed and strident for my taste. Interestingly, this didn't happen when I plugged into a Fender Acoustic SFX amp. The combination of the amp and the onboard Fishman/Mérida STD preamp really produced a beautiful tone with a fair amount of headroom. I'm almost tempted to say that the A17-DCES sounds better plugged in. Like all of the Mérida guitars we tested, the A17-DCES feels very nice to play, and the workmanship is impeccable.

CARDENAS C35-DCEH

I had rather the opposite experience of



Diana DC15-BK



**Cardenas
C35-DCEH**



**Milagros
M15-D**

the Alcazaba when playing the Cardenas. This acoustic-electric dreadnought cutaway produces a warm, rich tone when played acoustically, and the sound retains those qualities when played soft, hard, and anywhere in between. It's a solid and dynamically sensitive guitar. And yet, when I plugged into the Fender SFX amp, the electric sound turned out to be somewhat muddy. I tweaked practically every combination that the Fishman/Mérida Deluxe preamp would deliver, and while I was able to get a nice, usable tone, I felt I couldn't truly capture the beauty of the unplugged

sound. Remembering how the C35-DCEH was so hard to put down when I played acoustically, I'd definitely go for miking it when performing live. The C35-DCEH plays wonderfully, it's well crafted, and it struts a very natural and unadorned look cosmetically.

DIANA DC15-BK

The DC15-BK nylon-string classical guitar is drop-dead stunning. The black body, rich-brown mahogany trim, and eye-catching mother-of-pearl rosette are simply gorgeous—so much so that it seems hard to believe this beauty goes for just \$559

direct. It's not just a pretty face, either. The DC15-BK possesses a stout, sensual low end and a wonderfully sweet midrange attack that's never too edgy—even when you bear down with a fingernail or pick. It's also a light, comfortable, and easy-to-play guitar, and the finish and woodwork are flawless.

DIANA DG15-FOGACES

Here's another looker! I must admit that when I opened the case to the DG15-FOGACES, I was floored. Everything from the almost translucent tuning pegs to the eye-catching spalted ovankol

FRETS


MÉRIDA

back and sides to the vibrant cedar top screams world-class beauty. But when I strummed a chord, I was truly lost. The tone of this grand-auditorium model is rich and animated, with balanced lows, taut mids, and shimmering highs. I noticed some added edginess to the tone when I played hard, and, here, the Fishman/Mérida Standard preamp seems very well matched, producing a nice, clear, and crisp sound through the

Fender SFX amp. The DG15-FOGACES felt very good to play, and workmanship is superb.

MILAGROS M15-D

This simple, yet sophisticated dreadnought was probably my favorite guitar from a timbral standpoint. The deep and rich lows, crisp mids, and welcoming highs (a nice ring with no bite) enticed me to keep playing the M15-D until I feared I

would be trapped for hours under its sonic spell. The tone is truly unbelievable, and adjectives really can't describe the joy I felt while playing the M15-D. While there's no electronics on this model, I'd imagine you'd want to document its sound when performing live with a great microphone anyway. The absence of a cutaway was a small annoyance, and it otherwise played like a dream and exhibited no flaws in workmanship. 

Alcazaba A17-DCES

PRICE	\$839 direct
NUT WIDTH	42mm
NECK	Mahogany
FRETBOARD	Rosewood, 25.4" scale
FRETS	20 medium jumbo
TUNERS	Der Jung
BODY	Solid cedar top, rosewood back and sides
BRIDGE	Graph Tech Black Tusq XL
WEIGHT	4.62 lbs
FACTORY STRINGS	D'Addario EXP, .012-.052
PICKUP	Fishman/Mérida Standard preamp
BUILT	China
KUDOS	Good value. Good tones—especially when plugged in.
CONCERNS	Doesn't love being played hard.

Cardenas C35-DCEH

PRICE	\$1,049 direct
NUT WIDTH	42mm
NECK	Mahogany
FRETBOARD	Rosewood, 25.4" scale
FRETS	20 medium jumbo
TUNERS	Grover
BODY	Solid Sitka spruce top, mahogany back and sides
BRIDGE	Graph Tech Black Tusq XL
WEIGHT	3.96 lbs
FACTORY STRINGS	D'Addario EXP, .012-.052
PICKUP	Fishman/Mérida Deluxe preamp
BUILT	China
KUDOS	Good value. Good sound.
CONCERNS	Electrified tone not optimum.

Diana DC15-BK

PRICE	\$559 direct
NUT WIDTH	52mm
NECK	Mahogany
FRETBOARD	Rosewood, 25.5" scale
FRETS	19 standard
TUNERS	Der Jung Premium

BODY	Solid cedar top, mahogany back and sides
BRIDGE	Graph Tech Black Tusq XL
WEIGHT	3.38 lbs
FACTORY STRINGS	Savarez Cristal Corum High Tension 500CJ
BUILT	China
KUDOS	Crazy good value. Stunner. Good sound.
CONCERNS	None.

Diana DG15-FOGACES

PRICE	\$679 direct
NUT WIDTH	42mm
NECK	Mahogany
FRETBOARD	Rosewood, 25.4" scale
FRETS	20 medium jumbo
TUNERS	Der Jung
BODY	Solid cedar, spalted ovankol back and sides
BRIDGE	Graph Tech Black Tusq XL
WEIGHT	4.38 lbs
FACTORY STRINGS	D'Addario EXP, .012-.052
PICKUP	Fishman/Mérida Standard preamp
BUILT	China
KUDOS	Good value. Gorgeous looks and sound.
CONCERNS	Doesn't love being played hard.

Milagros M15-D

PRICE	\$499 direct
NUT WIDTH	42mm
NECK	Mahogany
FRETBOARD	Rosewood, 25.4" scale
FRETS	20 medium jumbo
TUNERS	Grover
BODY	Solid Sitka top, mahogany back and sides
BRIDGE	Graph Tech Tusq
WEIGHT	4.26 lbs
FACTORY STRINGS	D'Addario EXP, .012-.052
BUILT	China
KUDOS	Good value. Good sound.
CONCERNS	None.

CONTACT	meridaguitars.com
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A Mitchell acoustic guitar with a light-colored wood body and a dark pickguard is positioned on a black stand. To its right is a black amplifier with a silver faceplate and a large speaker. The background is dark, and the floor is made of wood.

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Available in dreadnought or auditorium style, with built-in Fishman electronics and cutaways, there is an Element guitar that will resonate with you. Play one today and you'll see. Starting from only \$299.

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FLATPICKING

D A N C R A R Y

Balance is a beautiful thing. It's balance that makes people like us live near freeways and drown out the noise with old Stanley Brothers records. It's a sort of warped balance that makes us drive like hell to a gig through a 70 MPH "free zone" created by microwave technology while Tommy Jarrell's fiddle tunes role on the tape player.

Tonight I'm striking a balance by writing this on the computer ("It's about time," my editor is thinking) while the stereo plays some weirdly wonderful Renaissance music.

It's even a kind of balance to publish old-time tunes in a flatpicking column across the page from information on the latest in future-shock nightmare electrical technology for processing the sound of an acoustic guitar. (I use some of it myself—just to get back to the old-time sound, you know.)

Just so in this second column on new positions for open chords; the idea is to retain the "old flat-top guitar" sound of open strings, while exploring some new variety and beauty that we hadn't realized were there all along. This month, in the key of *E*.

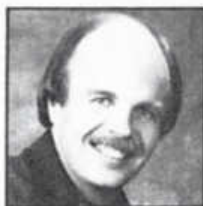
If you caught the June '89 column, you may remember that the idea is to think of keys in which three adjacent fretted strings plus three open strings make up the open-position chord. If we change only the fretted notes, whatever change we make will continue to be supported by the "tonic" sound of the open strings. The next step, then, for the key of *E* is to look for new places to fret the chords *E*, *A*, *B*, and *D* on the same three strings (third, fourth, and fifth) used in the open-position *E* chord (Ex. 1). Even though this open key is not as flexible as the amazing key of *A* (covered last time), there are some powerful possibilities.

For example, one of the great "power" chords on the guitar is Ex. 2; just listen to the stark force of this one. Hit it hard: Imagine it pounding away behind some dynamic section of a song or instrumental piece. Try it as a substitute for *E* almost anywhere you need some variety. Great stuff.

The *Asus* and *Bsus* chords (Exs. 3 and 4) shown here have that we-changed-the-chord-but-the-*E* sound is still in there feeling to them. You may have heard "new age" or folk music players use chords like these, but they can sound incredibly pretty behind a driving fast tune or song as well.

Ex. 5 is based on the principle that any open-chord fingering plus 12 frets sounds

More Open-String Chords



great, if you can reach it. This one is reachable without a cutaway model guitar, but it's also the acid test of your instrument's intonation and your tuning job. Very pretty, indeed.

The "Memphis" sequence—you remember the song, it goes "Long distance information . . ."—in Ex. 6 is a little inside trick I learned, years ago, which uses this principle of changing three strings of an open chord. The thing here is to make the finger that frets the fifth string lightly touch the side of the fourth string to deaden it. (As an alternative, you could mute the fourth string with another finger if that's more comfortable for you.) The usual application is to play the *E*, then the *Aadd9*, then *E7*, back to *Aadd9*, and home again to the original *E*.

Another very useful variation is to use the first half of the "Memphis" sequence to get to the *E7* as a lead-in to *A* when the tune demands it. In addition, I've included the *A* chord version of the "Memphis" sequence (Ex. 7) in case you want to use it throughout a tune. For *B*, do something bluesy to fit the feel.

Here's an intriguing idea for you players who accompany your own singing: Do a song in *E*, and play the "Memphis" sequence behind your singing. This is a little tricky to do, —it's like rubbing your tummy and pat-

ting your head simultaneously—but if you memorize the sequence and make it automatic, it can be used to very nice effect.

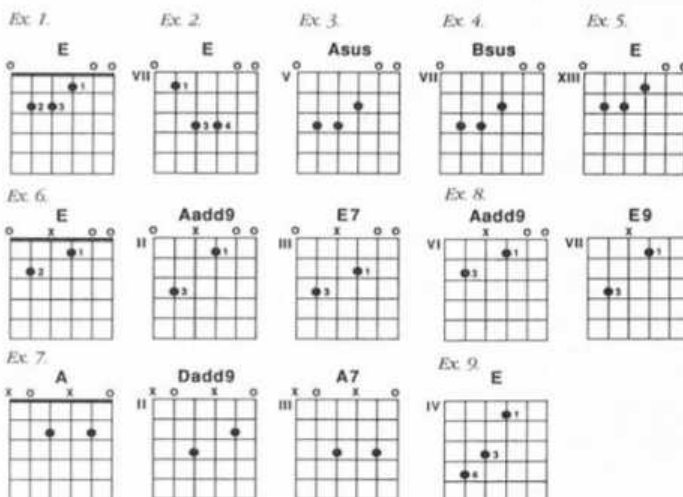
The "Memphis" add-ons (Ex. 8) can be tacked onto the basic "Memphis" sequence chords to set up an *E7* situation leading to an *A* chord. Try it—the experimentation will suggest some good applications.

Last, look at the *E* chord in Ex. 9. The chord itself may be useful, and in addition, you could handle this position like you would an open *C*. That is, on the fourth string, try a hammer-on from the 4th fret to the 6th. (It's similar to hammering on from the open fourth string to the 2nd fret in the *C* chord.) To do it you'll need to use the nail of your 1st finger to fret the fourth string at the 4th fret; then hammer on with the 3rd finger. If you can manage this contortion, you can hammer away and strum the top three strings as the chord for a sort of Carter-style lick.

As you can see, this is all "seed" stuff. Try these variations, explore the possibilities, listen to the sounds they create, and go looking for places to insert them to gain some variety in the music you already play.

Balance is a beautiful thing. You can stay loyal to the open-string sound, and at the same time let the force flow more freely through you with new chord ideas.

Flatpicking pioneer Dan Crary is a Professor of Speech Communication at California State University, Fullerton, and a founding member of Bertine, Crary & Hickman.





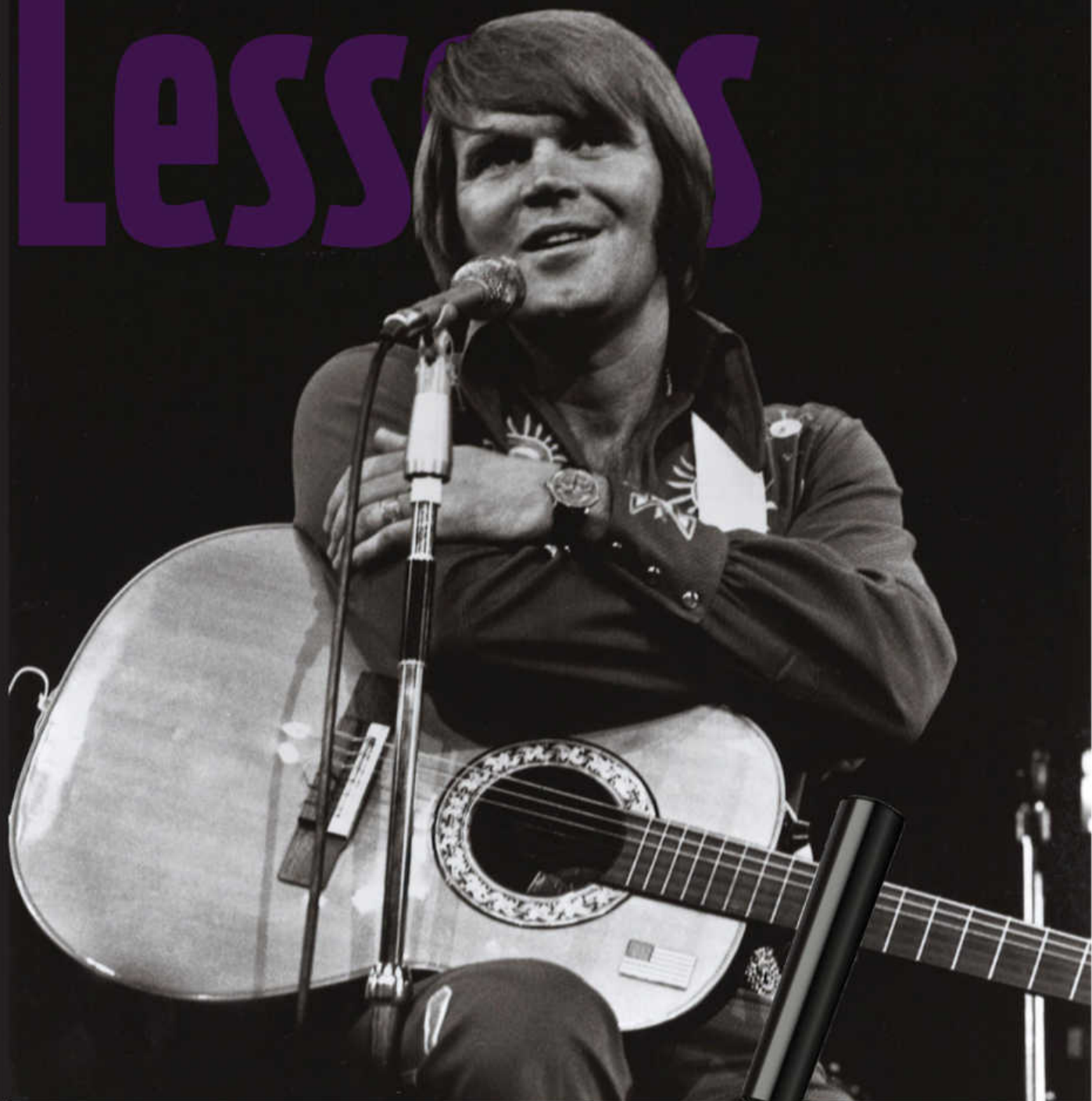
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Lessons



Under Investigation

Glen Campbell

BY JESSE GRESS

Now *that's* commitment.

With the release of *I'll Be Me*, Campbell has permitted unprecedented and startlingly frank coverage of his battle with this debilitating and largely misunderstood disease, which, while drastically affecting most of his cognitive abilities, has somehow left his guitar

skills relatively untouched through his last appearance in Napa, California, on November 30, 2012 (though he did suffer tonal and monitor difficulties during this show). As uplifting as it is heartbreaking, Glen Campbell's story is inspirational and will hopefully provide a source of comfort for any aging guitarist faced with similar circumstances. That said, let's leave the rest of his bio, gear info, and discography to the internets, and dive right into a heapin' helpin' of Campbell's good-time guitar playing.

Ex. 1 depicts the aforementioned chops-building finger-twister, which begins in first position on the first string. Assign one finger per fret and play four descending chromatic notes—*A*–*b*–*G*–*G*♭–*F*, fingered “4-3-2-1.” Stay in position, switch to the second string, and then reorder the fingering pattern to “4-1-2-3” to play *E*♭–*C*–*C*♯–*D*. This establishes the complete eight-note pattern, which is then repeated on each pair of adjacent strings over the course of two-and-a-half bars. The “turnaround” and shift to an ascending pattern occurs on beat three of the first 3/4 measure (bar 3). Bar 4 commences the “upside-down” version of the pattern. Move up one fret to second position, play *F*♯–*G*–*G*♯–*A* (fingered “1-2-3-4”) on the sixth string, and then jump to the fifth string and play *B*–*D*–*D*♭–*C* (fingered “1-4-3-2”) to complete the new eight-note pattern. Repeat the pattern on each ascending pair of adjacent strings until you hit beat three of the second 3/4 measure (bar 6). Use this beat to shift back to the first descending pattern, now played a whole-step higher in third position, and repeat the whole shebang until you run out of fret-board or stamina—whichever comes first!

Ex. 1

[illegible]

Lessons

GLEN CAMPBELL

Ex. 2a

♩ = ca. 114
w/Double-time feel
Acous. gtr.

D

let ring

T 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2
A 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3
B 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

GENTLE GLEN

Campbell's first big hit, 1967's "Gentle on My Mind," was written by John Hartford and features a propulsive hybrid-picking pattern similar to the one profiled in our recent John Lennon fingerstyle U.I. (November, 2015), albeit with a pick. **Ex. 2a** lays out the basic one-bar acoustic guitar figure using a single open-D chord, while **Ex. 2b** demonstrates how to apply the same pattern to eight bars of the song's verse progression. Except for bars 3 and 4, the pattern is halved to accommodate two chord changes per measure.

Ex. 2b

♩ = ca. 114
Acous. gtr.

D Dmaj7 D6 Dmaj7 Em

let ring throughout

T 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2
A 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3
B 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Em Em Em/maj7 Em7 Em6

let ring throughout

T 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2
A 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3
B 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

D Dmaj7 D6 Dmaj7

let ring throughout

T 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2
A 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3
B 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

COUNTRY SHRED

The original version of “Gentle On My Mind” did not feature a guitar solo, but Campbell often added one during live performances. The eight-bar acoustic excerpt in **Ex. 3** illustrates his penchant for sticking close to the melody while inserting flashy bits in the spaces between. (Tip: Use Ex. 2b for accompaniment, but change the two static bars of *Em* in bars 3 and 4 to *Em*, *Em/maj7*, *Em7*, and *Em6* to match bars 5 and 6.) Bars 1 and 2 paraphrase the vocal melody embellished with some jazzed-up phrasing,

and bar 3 nails the changes with key chord tones (*E*, *D* \sharp , and *D*) interspersed between a repetitive 2- \flat 3-5 (*F* \sharp -*G*-*B*) motif. Campbell adds a short, Les-Paul-style fill in bar 4, before the pickup at the end of the measure briefly quotes the melody and morphs into bar 5's flurry of Les-inspired hammer-ons and pull-offs phrased as a three-against-four hemiola. Campbell absolutely shreds the last three bars with a fusion of be-bop (bar 6) and *D* pentatonic-major-based country licks (bar 7) decorated with chromatic hammer-ons and pull-offs (bar 8).



Ex. 3

♩ = ca. 114
Acous. qtr.

Acous. gtr.

D Dmaj7 D6 Dmaj7 Em Em/maj7

7 10 10 7 10 7 10 10 7 10 7 10 7 9 7 9 7 8 8 7 8 7

6

Em7 Em6 D

2 3 4 5 2 3 2 4 2 5 3 2 4 2 5 4 (7) 3 7 10 7 10 7 5 7 7 5 3 4 5 3 4 2 2 3 2 0

GLEN CAMPBELL

The unforgettable melody from Jimmy Webb's "Wichita Lineman" sonically invokes the Great Plains, a trait that Campbell greatly enhanced by recording his solo on a tremolo-effected baritone guitar tuned a fifth below standard tuning. Framed by the first seven bars of Webb's beautiful 17-bar chord progression

(see this month's Rhythm Workshop for details), **Ex. 4** shows the solo arranged for both standard and baritone guitars, which is how Campbell often performed it in concert. Note how the baritone part mirrors the standard guitar fingering played one string lower until the last two bars. You could also play the baritone part on a 6-string bass (with a

pick, of course), in which case the fingering remains the same as the guitar part. There's not much else to say about this one except once you learn it, prepare to have it stuck in your head for at least six months!

Campbell's live renditions of "Wichita

♩ = ca. 82

Gr. 1

Gr. 2 w/tremolo

Gr. 2

A E C G D A

*Gr. 2 - Baritone guitar tuned down a fifth.

4

Dm7 Am7 G D Dsus4

1 3 1 3 1 3 1 3

3 5 5 3 5 5 3 5

5 5 7 9 7 5 5 7 (7) 7 9 9 7 5

3 5 5 3 5 5 3 5 5 7 9 7 5 7 (7) 2 4 2 4 2 0

broken Wes Montgomery-style octaves before returning to the melody in bar 6. Campbell sticks to the song's instrumental tag melody for the last four measures, beginning with an octave jump in bar 7 and concluding in bar 10 with a whole-step grace-note slide into the same note. Absolutely beautiful stuff!

Lessons

GLEN CAMPBELL

REED BETWEEN THE LINES

Finally, we fast-forward to 1977, when, with inspiration from Jerry Reed, Campbell's cover of Allen Toussaint's "Southern Nights" received more airplay than any other song that year. Reed's contribution was the cool lick—essentially two single-note lines converging from opposite directions—that Campbell tagged onto the song's opening *E* pentatonic major hook. **Ex. 6a** shows both in action arranged for one player, while **Ex. 6b** breaks Reed's figure into two separate guitar parts and adds syncopation to the top line. (Tip: Try swapping rhythms on beats three and four of the top part.)

Either way, it's a guaranteed head-turner!

We've barely scratched the surface of Campbell's immense oeuvre. Search the Web and you'll discover everything from jams with the likes of Phil Baugh and Jerry Reed to an amazing instrumental reading of Bill Withers's "Ain't No Sunshine" to an astounding, full-shred, acoustic guitar version of the "William Tell Overture" with full orchestra. It's all pretty mind-boggling. In fact, the best way we can show our love is to keep Glen Campbell's music alive for the next half-century and beyond. Thanks, Glen, and I hope you get to see this! *GP* and its readers love you!! 🎸

Ex. 6a

♩ = ca. 96
12-string elec.

N.C

Play three times

Ex. 6b

♩ = ca. 96

Gtr. 1

Gtr. 2

Wichita Lineman

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Gentle On My Mind

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Southern Nights

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Photo by Monica Frisell

Name That Tune!

BY JESSE GRESS

AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY different: Since this month's classic sixties "mystery riff" is so dang easy to play, it will be presented entirely by word of mouth, and can only be revealed by assembling and solving the following series of clues. Get these two bars of classic rock history right and you should feel very satisfied!

CLUE #1: The fuzz-toned riff in question is in a modal key of *E* (Mixolydian), encompasses two bars, and was designed to be accompanied by a second guitar playing the three chords diagrammed in **Ex. 1**.

CLUE #2: The riff is based on the

two-bar rhythmic motif shown in **Ex. 2a**.

CLUE #3: Though many seem to think so, the three single notes in **Ex. 2b**—*E* (the root), *F#* (the 2), and *G* (the ♭3)—are *not* the ones used to play the riff.

CLUE #4: **Ex. 3a**'s refined version of the rhythm from **Ex. 2a** features three strategically placed eighth-rests and a subtle slide between eighth-notes on beat three.

CLUE #5: The three single notes illustrated in **Ex. 3b**—*B* (the 5), *C#* (the 6), and *D* (the ♭7)—are indeed the correct ones used to play the riff.

CLUE #6: The bass riff is *not* the same

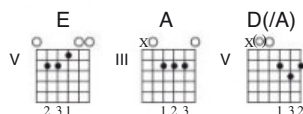
as the lead guitar riff. **Ex. 4a** sketches out its substantially different rhythmic framework, while **Ex. 4b** provides four suggested bass notes—*E* (the root), *F#* (the 2), *G* (the ♭3), and *A* (the 4).

CLUE #7: Keeping all of the previous clues in mind, assemble the guitar and bass riffs by applying the following formulae:

Chords = $3 \times E + 1 \times A + 3 \times D + 1 \times A$. Guitar riff = $3 \times B + 1 \times C\# + 3 \times D + 2 \times C\#$. Bass part = $3 \times E + 1 \times F\# + 1 \times G + 3 \times A + 1 \times G + 1 \times F\#$.

Still mystified? Well hey, hey, hey! That's what I say! 🎸

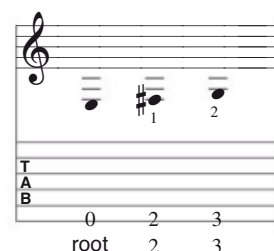
Ex. 1



Ex. 2a



Ex. 2b



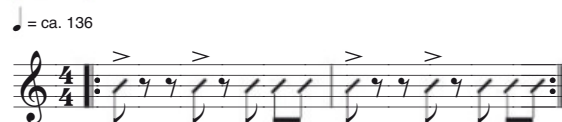
Ex. 3



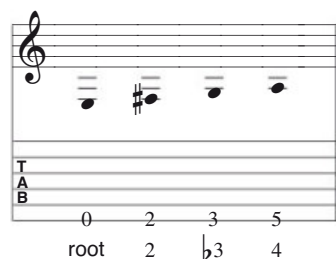
Ex. 3b



Ex. 4a



Ex. 4b





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Fretboard Recipes Melodic Sequences Pt. 1

BY JESSE GRESS

BECAUSE INTERVALS AND MELODIC motifs can be represented numerically, it is possible to adapt them to mathematical sequences. There are two types of sequences—"intervallic," which utilize two-note intervals, and "motivic," which utilize longer motifs. There are also two subdivisions of each: "diatonic," where each step of the sequence uses only notes from a single parent scale, and "parallel,"

where each step of the sequence uses the same intervallic or motivic motion without adjustment. Like intervallic cycles, sequences and their permutations introduce all possibilities of melodic motion.

Ex. 1 shows two fingerings each for the seven diatonic interval sequences inherent to the C major scale and its modes. Play each one as written (ascending), in reverse (descending), and then transpose

them to all 12 keys.

Reversing the order of notes in every other interval, as illustrated in **Ex. 2**, substantially increases melodic mileage.

(Next: Three-note melodic sequences.) ■

Jesse Gress is the author of The Guitar Cookbook: The Complete Guide to Rhythm, Melody, Harmony, Technique & Improvisation [Backbeat].

Ex. 1

Diatonic seconds

fingering: 2 4 1 2 4 1 3 4 1

scale steps: 1 2 • 2 3 • 3 4 • 4 5 • 5 6 • 6 7 • 7 1 • 1 2

T A B 3 5 5 2 2 3 3 5 5 2 2 4 4 5 5 3

alternate fingering: 1 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

T A B 3 5 5 7 7 8 8 10 10 12 12 14 14 15 15 17

Diatonic thirds

fingering: 2 1 4 2 1 4 2 1 4 3 1 4 2 1 4 4

scale steps: 1 3 • 2 4 • 3 5 • 4 6 • 5 7 • 6 1 • 7 2 • 1 3 •

T A B 3 2 5 3 2 5 3 2 5 4 2 5 4 3 5 5

alternate fingering: 2 1 3 1 3 1 2 1 2 1 3 1 3 1 2 1

T A B 3 2 5 3 7 5 8 7 10 9 12 10 14 12 15 14

Diatonic fourths

fingering: 2 2 4 4 1 1 2 3 4 4 1 2 3 4 3 4

scale steps: 1 4 • 2 5 • 3 6 • 4 7 • 5 1 • 6 2 • 7 3 • 1 4 •

T A B 3 3 5 5 2 2 3 4 5 5 2 3 4 5 5 6

alternate fingering: 1 1 3 3 1 1 2 3 1 1 3 3 1 1 2 2

T A B 3 3 5 5 7 7 8 9 10 10 12 12 14 14 15 15

Diatonic fifths

fingering: 2 4 4 1 1 3 2 4 4 2 1 4 2 4 3 1

scale steps: 1 5 • 2 6 • 3 7 • 4 1 • 5 2 • 6 3 • 7 4 • 1 5 •

T A B 3 5 5 2 4 3 5 3 2 5 4 6 5 3

alternate fingering: 1 4 1 4 1 4 1 4 1 4 1 4 1 3 1 4

T A B 3 5 5 7 9 8 10 10 12 12 14 14 15 15 17

fingering:	
scale steps: 1 6 • 2 7 • 3 1 • 4 2 •	5 3 • 6 4 • 7 5 • 1 6 •
T 2 4 5 3	5 6 3 5
A 3 5 2 3	5 2 4 5
B 3 5	
alternate fingering: 2 1 2 1 3 1 2 1	2 1 3 1 3 1 2 1
T 2 4 5 7	9 10 12 14
A 3 5 7 8	10 12 14 15
B 3 5	

fingering:		fingering:	
scale steps:	1 7 • 2 1 • 3 2 • 4 3 •	5 4 • 6 5 • 7 6 • 1 7 •	
T	4 3 5	6 3 5 7	
A		2 4 5	
B	3 5 2 3	5 2 4 5	
alternate fingering:	1 3 2 3 2 3 1 3	2 3 2 3 2 3 1 3	
T	4 5 7 9	10 12 14 16	
A			
B	3 5 7 8	10 12 14 15	

<p>fingering: </p> <p>scale steps: 1 1 • 2 2 • 3 3 • 4 4 •</p> <p>T 5 3 5 6 A 3 5 2 3</p> <p>alternate fingering: 1 4 1 4 1 4 1 4</p> <p>T 5 7 9 10 A 3 5 7 8</p>	<p></p> <p>5 5 • 6 6 • 7 7 • 1 1 •</p> <p>3 5 7 8 5 2 4 5</p> <p>1 4 1 4 1 4 1 4</p> <p>12 14 16 17 10 12 14 15</p>
---	---

ascending thirds: descending thirds: ascending sevenths: descending sevenths:

fingering: 1 3 • 4 2 • 3 5 • 6 4 • etc. 3 1 • 7 2 • 1 6 • 5 7 • etc. 1 7 • 1 2 • 3 2 • 3 4 • etc. 7 1 • 7 6 • 5 6 • 5 4 • etc.

scale steps: 3 5 4 3 5 2 5 4 4 5 3 5 7 5 4 2 5

T A B 3 2 3 5 2 5 3 5 5 4 3 5 2 5 4 4 5 3 5 7 5 4 2 5

Rhythm Workshop Odd Bar Counts

BY JESSE GRESS

ONE OUTSTANDING TRAIT FOUND in numerous songs written by the Beatles, Burt Bacharach, and Jimmy Webb (as well as many others) is the use of odd amounts of 4/4 measures to create very natural sounding harmonic foundations, i.e. chord progressions, for truly memorable melodies. We can't print the melodies here, but we can inspect the frameworks from a pair of very recognizable tunes and analyze their harmonic structures.

Our first example, which ties in nicely with this month's Under Investigation, breaks down Jimmy Webb's timeless and

iconic "Wichita Lineman" as rendered by Glen Campbell. (Tip: You can check out the instrumental version of the melody on page 66.) **Ex. 1** illustrates the song's 17-bar chord progression, which encompasses two key centers—*F* and *D*. (We don't count the pickup measure of the vocal melody, as this is actually bar 17 of the progression.) Bars 1 through 3 constitute the first feeling of "oddness" with a three-bar *B♭maj7-Fmaj7-Gm7(9)* progression (IV-I-IIm in the key of *F*) that completes the first melodic statement—the "call" to the "response" in bars 4 through 7. Bar 4

remains in the key of *F* (*Dm7* = VIIm and *Am7* = IIIIm), but the move to *G* in bar 5 falls outside of that key, and, along with bars 6 and 7, signals a shift to the key of *D*, where *G* is the IV chord and *D* becomes the new the tonic I chord. (Note how the ear initially gets faked out into hearing *G* as the I chord and *D* as the V.)

The move to *Csus2* in bars 8 and 9 creates the impression of a IV chord in *G*, but it functions here as the ♭VII-chord in *D*. The ensuing *G/B*-to-*Gm/B♭* changes in bars 10 and 11 utilize a fairly common IV-to-IVm strategy that sets up both the

Ex. 1

♩ = ca. 82

VI (B♭/C) X X
3 4 2 1

V B♭maj7 X
1 T 4 3 2 1

V Fmaj7 X
4 3 1 1 1

III Gm7(9) X
T 3 1(1) 1 4(4)

Dm7 XXO
2 1 1

Am7 XO
2 1

III G X
T 3 2 1 1

6 D XXO
1 3 2

Dsus4 XXO
1 3 4

D XXO
1 3 2

*Csus2/G III X
T 3 4 1 1

G/B (b) XX
(2) 1 4

Gm/B♭ X X
1 4

*Bass plays C

12 D XXO
1 3 2

Asus4 XO
1 1 3

X B♭ XXX
1 3 2

X Csus2 XXX
2 4 1

X B♭ XXX
1 3 2

X Csus2 XXX
2 4 1

return to the I chord (*D*) in bar 12 and the ultra-cool sounding *Asus4* V chord in bar 13. The four remaining measures confuse the tonality even further by temporarily implying the key of *D* minor, with *B♭* acting as the *♭VI* chord and *C* as the *♭VII*, but we're actually back in *F*, where *B♭* = IV and *C* = V, and both chords set up the return to the original key at the top of the progression.

The Beatles catalog contains numerous examples of odd bar counts—check out “Taxman” (13-bar verse), “I’m Only Sleeping” (15-bar verse), “Hello Goodbye”

(9-bar verse and 7-bar chorus), and “I Will” (9-bar verse)—but the most famous by far is the 7-bar verse form found in “Yesterday.” Though **Ex. 2** outlines the song’s progression as fingered in the key of *G*, Paul McCartney famously tuned his Epiphone Texan acoustic down two semitones (*D*, *G*, *C*, *F*, *A*, *D*, low to high), which makes all of the same fingerings sound one whole-step lower than written.

We begin the steady eighth-note strumming pattern with one measure of the tonic *G* chord, and then immediately *II*m-V into its relative *VI*m chord with the *F♯m-B7-Em*

changes in bars 2 and 3. A descending *D* bass note connects *Em* to the *Cmaj7-D7-G* (*IV-V-I*) movement that follows in bars 4 and 5. Another descending bass note (*F♯*) leads to the *Vim* chord (*Em7*), the dominant *II* chord (*A*), and, ultimately, the concluding *C-to-G* (*IV-I*) movement in bar 7.

Of course it’s the songs’ melodies that so magnificently bring these odd-count chord progressions to life. Hum, sing, or just imagine them while playing the chords, and marvel at how musical odd-bar counts can sound in the hands of a master composer. ■

Ex. 2

♩ = ca. 98

1

G5 F♯m B7 Em Em/D Cmaj7 D7

2(1) 34 T 34 1 1 1 2 3 4 2 3 x x x x x x 3 2 2 1 3

sim.

5

G5 G/F♯ Em7 A C G5

2(1) 34 1 x x x x x 2 3 4 1 2 3 x x x 3 2 1 2(1) 34

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Gear



ROUNDUP

15 Bodacious Budget Electrics

TESTED BY THE *GUITAR PLAYER* STAFF

IT'S EASY TO GET SUCKED INTO THE IDEA THAT A GOOD guitar has to be expensive. True, there are some plusses to spending \$3,000 or more on a finely crafted solidbody from one of the premium makers. Hand-picked woods that are aged to ensure that excess moisture won't interfere with tone, and pickups that have been wound on the same machines used by Gibson or Fender in their Golden Age are but a few of the factors that support the notion that you get what you pay for when it comes to guitars. Like many things these days, however, companies large and small have cracked the code on how to produce guitars that sound, look, and play very impressively at prices that often defy logic.

The reasons for this, of course, hinge a lot on the global economy, whereby workers in certain parts of the world—okay, let's just say Asia—get paid atrociously less than their counterparts in Western countries. Materials factor into it too, as woods sourced from suppliers who don't give a shite about the sustainability of tonewoods such as mahogany and rosewood are obviously going to be cheaper than those purchased from cutters who harvest trees in a manner that ensures the

survival of their habitats. Just have to say it: As one of the brands featured in this story, Godin is notable for having a long history of building very affordable guitars using a local workforce and materials sourced from forests right in their own Canadian backyard. So it can be done, and depending on your point of view on such things, this alone might influence what you buy.

For this roundup of “budget” guitars we set the upper price limit at \$799 street, which encompasses instruments that qualify as professional quality, while still allowing for “gateway” guitars that the beginner can get into for less than the price of a tablet PC. All of these guitars were evaluated on the basis of build quality and setup, and all were given thorough shakeouts—multiple times, in fact—to see how they stacked up for playability and tone. And while no reviewer can divorce themselves completely from their preferences for pickup types, neck shapes, or body styles, the truth is that after playing these guitars through a broad assortment of amplifiers and pedals, we all came away pretty impressed by what they have to offer. —ART THOMPSON



BOHEMIAN GUITARS BOHO MOTOR OIL

OKAY—YOU WANT TO BREAK OUT of your same-old same-old? Well, have I got the oil can guitar for you! Full disclosure: This is not a solidbody guitar like we promised on the cover. It isn't your typical hollowbody either, though. You've probably seen the crazy vibey instruments from Bohemian Guitars and wondered, "Does that thing even *play*?" If it does, what does it sound like?" Well, it actually plays just fine once you get used to the fact that it doesn't sit on your lap quite like a normal guitar. The neck is comfortable and the action was easy to chord and bend on. There is also a very real "fun factor" that is inescapable when you're playing a guitar that has a damn oil can for a body!

That body is actually reinforced with basswood for both tone and stability. The maple neck runs the length of the body, and there is a removable panel on the back for accessing the electronics and hardware, but you could also stick a mic in there if things haven't gotten oily enough for you.

I plugged the Boho into a Kendrick combo

and started riffing. It produces a full, slightly dark tone that was great for grungy chording and spooky slide lines. Pairing it with a Fulltone Full Drive pedal proved that the Motor Oil could be a ballsy rock machine as well. I got my best results by running the Full Drive bright and with lots of gain, which made bridge-pickup power chords bark with authority and kept the neck pickup clear and sing-y. Because there are no split-coil options, I tended to dial in clean tones on the bright side as well.

So who would want this thing, anyway? Honestly, lots of players. It might not be someone's choice for their first or only guitar, but anyone who wants to add some vibe and whimsy to their collection (and let's be honest... we could all use a little whimsy) would love a Boho. One look at their website and the great demo video by Grant Reynolds will show you that this guitar is well suited for gut-bucket blues, barroom boogie, and a whole bunch of other styles. Plus, it has a built-in stand! Just set it on the ground and walk away. Pretty damn cool.

—MATT BLACKETT

MODEL

BOHO MOTOR OIL

CONTACT bohemianguitars.com

PRICE \$299 retail

SPECIFICATIONS

NUT WIDTH	1 11/16"
NECK	Maple
FRETBOARD	Rosewood 25 1/2" scale
FRETS	21
TUNERS	3+3 w/removable keys
BODY	Recycled hollow metal w/ basswood frame and removable back panel
BRIDGE	Tune-o-matic style
PICKUPS	Two humbuckers
CONTROLS	Volume, Tone, 3-way toggle
FACORY STRINGS	.009-.042
WEIGHT	6.2 lbs
BUILT	China
KUDOS	Guaranteed eye-catcher. Easy playability. Built-in stand.
CONCERNS	Slightly dark sounding.



CARVIN GUITARS BOLT-C

WE'VE BEEN QUITE SMITTEN WITH the offerings from Carvin and now Kiesel Guitars over the past few years, with their Jason Becker-inspired signature offerings and custom-shop-level showpieces. Well, this hum-sing-sing beauty brings all that quality at a substantially more affordable price point.

I hit one chord on the Bolt-C and could instantly tell that it has great sustain and resonance. The notes just seem to jump right off the gold EVO frets before I ever plugged it in. The playability is insane, with perfectly leveled and polished frets and unlimited bendability. Kiesel now installs dual carbon-fiber reinforcing rods in every neck they build, greatly contributing to neck stability.

I have always been into the hum-sing-sing pickup configuration. It just seems to possess the perfect combination of VH power chords and SRV neck-pickup tones, and the Bolt-C delivers on all fronts. This model takes advantage of Kiesel's great promo of \$100 of free upgrades, so, at no extra charge, the customer

gets the aforementioned EVO gold frets, a KL12B bridge pickup, and S60 neck and middle pickups. That translates to killer tones in all positions, with the neck single-coil being particularly badass. The clean tones sounded great but when I went for some high-gain textures this guitar really came alive. The slick setup made blazing legato passages a breeze and I could bend as crazy as I wanted with no buzz whatsoever. It's no big surprise that fusion masters like Greg Howe and Frank Gambale choose this Carvin to work their magic. You can pretty much do anything with this guitar.

Carvin Guitars has long been a place where players can specify whatever options they want on an instrument. The model reviewed here can be modified with a Floyd Rose whammy, different fret options, various neck radii, custom pickup options, and assorted finishes. Their attention to detail is superb and the quality is unassailable. If you're in the market for a solid-body electric, you *need* to check out a Bolt-C.

—MATT BLACKETT

MODEL

BOLT-C

CONTACT	kieselguitars.com
PRICE	\$799 direct

SPECIFICATIONS

NUT WIDTH	1.69"
NECK	Hard rock maple with tung oil finish and inline headstock
FRETBOARD	Maple 25 1/2" scale with 14" radius
FRETS	22 gold EVO medium jumbo
TUNERS	Chrome
BODY	Alder
BRIDGE	FT6 hardtail
PICKUPS	KL12B Lithium humbucker (bridge) and two S60 single-coils (neck and middle)
CONTROLS	Master Volume and Tone, 5-way toggle, On/Off Bridge switch
FACTORY STRINGS	Elixir Nanoweb 1046E
WEIGHT	7.25 lbs
BUILT	USA
KUDOS	Great construction. Huge array of tones. Slick playability.
CONCERNS	None.

ROUNDUP



DANELECTRO CONVERTIBLE

BASED ON ITS NAMESAKE MODEL

from the 1960s, the latest incarnation of the Convertible features a piezo transducer under the bridge and a Blend knob to control the mag/piezo mix. It also has niceties like die-cast tuners, a glossy tobacco-sunburst finish (also available in black and white), and a wooden bridge that can be rotated for intonation adjustments. My only gripe is that the bridge's un-notched steel saddle allows the strings to slip sideways when you pick or pluck the strings even moderately hard, making little creaking sounds in the process. It's surprising that the factory hasn't addressed this issue, but otherwise, the Convertible plays well thanks to its slim, satin-finished neck and polished frets with smooth tips.

The semi-hollow "shorthorn" body is light and resonant, which helps to give this guitar a vibrant unplugged sound. Running into a Dr. Z Z-Lux or Kendrick 4210 combo, the '56 Lipstick pickup in the soundhole provides a clear and

beefy amplified tone with a voicing that sits well amidst standard humbucker and single-coil guitars. Blending in the under-bridge piezo takes things in a more acoustic direction, albeit with a pleasing sort of nasally honk in the mid-range and a top-end sweetness that's quite different from the often-strident piezo sounds that acoustic-electric guitars can be prone to. In fact, the more piezo you blend in, the more the Convertible assumes a sort of Dobro-like persona, which makes it fun for blues and slide playing, especially when put in an open tuning. Also, unlike many hybrid electrics, the Tone control affects the magnetic *and* piezo signals.

The Convertible has always been a different animal in the Dano line, and this latest version carries on the tradition in fine form. The blendable pickups are a good update here, helping to make this Dano a very cool "color" guitar with a voice that can sit equally well in a track or a live mix. —ART THOMPSON

MODEL

CONVERTIBLE

CONTACT danelectro.com

PRICE \$499 street

SPECIFICATIONS

NUT WIDTH	1.69" aluminum
NECK	Maple, bolt on
FRETBOARD	Rosewood, 25" scale
FRETS	21
TUNERS	Vintage-style enclosed
BODY	Poplar and Masonite semi-hollow
BRIDGE	Wood with steel saddle, floating metal tailpiece
PICKUPS	'56 Lipstick (neck) and piezo underneath the bridge
CONTROLS	Volume, Tone, piezo/magnetic Blend control
FACTORY STRINGS	D'Addario, 010-.046
WEIGHT	5.56 lbs
BUILT	China
KUDOS	A good sounding hybrid guitar.
CONCERNS	Strings can move sideways due to un-notched bridge saddle.



EPIPHONE LES PAUL TRIBUTE PLUS OUTFIT

WITH SO MUCH ATTENTION BEING focused these days on Gibson's high-end clones of late '50 and early '60s Les Pauls, it's nice to see that Epiphone has come out with its own highly affordable version of a vintage LP in the guise of the Les Paul Tribute Plus Outfit (the "outfit" part refers to the included hardshell case). This guitar offers the essential elements such as a great playing SlimTaper D-style mahogany set neck capped with 12"-radius rosewood fretboard, a mahogany body with a carved maple top, and a set of Gibson-made '57 Classic humbuckers that feed the standard configuration of dual Volume and Tone controls and a 3-way selector. The only deference to modern times is that the Tone pots are push-pull types that split the coils of the pickups for single-coil sounds when you pull up on the barrel-style "speed" knobs. Given a high-gloss faded cherry sunburst finish (other finishes available) with flawless cream-colored binding on the top and neck, the Tribute Plus looks fantastic. There are even cream plastic covers for the control and toggle-switch cavities on the back.

So what you get here is a reasonably lightweight LP that is set up very well and gives the

same kind of soulful playing feel you expect from a vintage-style guitar—minus perhaps the feel of nitro lacquer, which is one of the things you pay extra for on the high-end Gibsons. Otherwise, I found the Tribute Plus to be a blast as it has the quick attack and long sustain of a good LP, and packs a sonic wallop courtesy of its PAF-style humbuckers, which deliver a cool blend of fatness and chime for lead playing, and roll back for ringing clean tones when you turn 'em down. The neck pickup can do warm jazz rhythm textures or sing with a sweet tone when driving a high-gain amp such as the Mesa/Boogie Mark 5:25 I used. The bridge position may come up a little short of the Tele-style bite that a prized PAF can deliver, but it's still a fine sounding pickup with ballsy mids and a clear, smooth top end that makes it very satisfying for grinding rhythm tones and gained-up solos.

The Tribute Plus is an obvious choice for anyone who wants to get into this legendary blues/rock guitar for a fraction of what a Gibson would set you back. It packs all the essential LP elements needed to deliver the classic dual-humbucker experience, and what a swingin' deal for all you get! —ART THOMPSON

MODEL

LES PAUL TRIBUTE PLUS OUTFIT

CONTACT	epiphone.com
PRICE	\$749 street, including hardshell case

SPECIFICATIONS

NUT WIDTH	1.69"
NECK	Mahogany, SilmTaper D style profile
FRETBOARD	Rosewood, 24.75" scale, 12" radius
FRETS	22 jumbo
TUNERS	Grover locking
BODY	Mahogany with carved maple top
BRIDGE	Lock Tone Tune-o-matic with stop tailpiece
PICKUPS	Two Gibson USA '57 Classic humbuckers
CONTROLS	Two Volume, two Tone (with push-pull coil-split), 3-way selector
FACTORY STRINGS	010-.046
WEIGHT	8.64 lbs
BUILT	China
KUDOS	A well made, good sounding, and very affordable vintage-style Les Paul
CONCERNS	None.

ROUNDUP



ESP LTD FRX-401

WHEN WE UNBOXED THIS LTD FRX-401, we were a little frightened by the pointy horns and seemingly jagged edges along the body contours. Still, though, we were drawn in by the sleek curves, glossy finish, and undeniable solidity that this guitar exudes. Anyone who has played an ESP instrument knows all about their astounding fit and finish, slick playability, and overall quality, and this piece is right in keeping with that ethos. It was perfectly in tune right out of the case and immediately gave up big chords and effortless runs. Nice!

The cosmetics are admittedly a two-edged sword, but they are expertly rendered. The snow white finish is flawless and the hardware sets it off very nicely. Once you pick up the 401 and start playing, you really don't notice that it has some extreme features. You're much more likely to be taken in by the beautiful fretwork, easy bends, and impressive sustain. The set-neck construction gives you super-easy access to the 24th fret and also imparts a delicious resonance

that you can feel all through the body.

This guitar was obviously built to rock, and the EMG humbuckers do a great job of that, with the mean, focused distorted tones that we love about them. That doesn't mean that they can't do great clean sounds (ever heard a Metallica record?), and the neck pickup is beautifully balanced and the two-pickup tones are nicely detailed. With those pickups and the guitar's sweet setup I found myself blazing through legato passages and churning out fiendishly picked staccato lines. You never want to ask a piece of gear to make up for what you lack as a player, but I swear the 401 can do a little bit of that. Bonus!

It's up to each of us to decide what kind of look we need in a guitar, but we can all pretty much agree on what we want in terms of quality, and this guitar flat-out delivers. This level of quality can be found on any LTD model, however, so keep that in mind while shopping.

—MATT BLACKETT

MODEL

FRX-401

CONTACT espguitars.com

PRICE \$799 street

SPECIFICATIONS

NUT WIDTH	1.69"
NECK	Maple
FRETBOARD	Rosewood 25 1/2" scale with 13.78" radius
FRETS	24 jumbo
TUNERS	Grover
BODY	Mahogany
BRIDGE	LTD Fixed
PICKUPS	EMG81 humbucker (bridge) and 60 humbucker (neck)
CONTROLS	Master Volume and Tone, 5-way toggle, On/Off Bridge switch
FACTORY STRINGS	Elixir Nanoweb 1046E
WEIGHT	7.1 lbs
BUILT	China
KUDOS	Amazing playability. Unique look. Impressive sustain.
CONCERNS	Body style might be extreme for some tastes.



FENDER STANDARD JAZZMASTER HH

IT'S ALWAYS FUN TO IMAGINE WHAT might have happened if Fender and Gibson had merged in the 1960s, but one possibility would have been a Jazzmaster with humbuckers and a Tune-o-matic bridge (and, of course, the mercurial floating vibrato with its extra-long arm), which is basically what we have here with the Jazzmaster HH. Presented in Ghost Silver with a black pickguard, and outfitted with pickups sporting black and chrome bobbins, the HH is one graphic treatment away from becoming something you could snap up at an Oakland Raiders kiosk. With 22 well-dressed jumbo frets on its rosewood 'board, the Jazzmaster HH also feels like the rock axe it might have become if Gibson's Ted McCarty had his way with this model. Would the Ventures, the Surfaris or Sonic Youth have been the same if things had gone that way? Who knows, but for today's players who dig the Jazzmaster's visual allure, the HH is a rock-friendly platform with plenty of sonic tricks up its sleeve.

Played though a Mesa/Boogie Mark 5: 25,

and a BluGuitar Amp 1, the Jazzmaster HH proved its ability to field tones that ranged from majestically clean to massively distorted. The neck pickup has a rich and detailed sound, and since it's the louder of the two, it's especially cool for soloing in humbucker mode, as well as for clean chording and fingerpicking when functioning as a single-coil. The dual-pickup setting with the coils split also provides cool rhythmic and melodic textures, and the only issue here is that the skirted Tone knob is difficult to get your fingers under when you want to pull it up in a hurry (a *push-push* Tone pot would be a welcome update). The bridge pickup isn't so hot that it loses clarity when you crank it up, making for meaty OD tones that have depth and detail, even when pushing a blizzard of distortion. The bottom line is, the more I played this guitar the more it grew on me, so if you seek a classic Fender that goes where no Fender has gone before, you owe it to yourself to try out the Jazzmaster HH.

—ART THOMPSON

MODEL

STANDARD JAZZMASTER HH

CONTACT	fender.com
PRICE	\$599 street

SPECIFICATIONS

NUT WIDTH	1.69"
NECK	Maple
FRETBOARD	Rosewood, 25.5" scale, 9.5" radius
FRETS	22 jumbo
TUNERS	Die-cast
BODY	Alder
BRIDGE	Adjustable 6-saddle with Jazzmaster vibrato
PICKUPS	Two Blacktop humbuckers
CONTROLS	Volume, Tone (with push-pull coil-split), 3-way selector
FACTORY STRINGS	Fender, 010-.046
WEIGHT	8.64 lbs
BUILT	Mexico
KUDOS	Biggest sounding Jazzmaster yet. Plays well.
CONCERNS	Difficult to pull the Tone knob. No vibrato lock.

ROUNDUP



GODIN SESSION LTD

THIS BOLT-NECK BEAUT LOOKS SLICK with its Desert Blue finish and pearloid pickguard, and it comes outfitted with everything needed to make it a good choice for working players who want maximum performance for their money. The satin-finished maple neck feels as comfy as worn-in Levis, and the fretwork is super clean with even crowns and non-spikey tips—even the nut has been shaped to remove sharp corners. The 12" radius maple fretboard, which sports highly visible black dots on the top and sides, is perfect for bluesy bending, while still providing a fluid surface for speedy picking. Godin's fully adjustable trem bridge is adjusted to float for soulful pitch bends, and its buttery action helps it return to pitch very reliably. The Tru-Loc feature is cool too, as it allows you to easily adjust the range of swing on the bar (using the included hex wrench) so that it sits exactly where you want it

To make this model suitable for a wide variety of styles, Godin has designed the Session LTD around the popular hum/sing/sing pickup

configuration, using two of its own GS-1s in the pickguard and a Duncan SH-11 that sits in a chrome-plated bezel in the bridge slot. Along with a 5-way switch and knurled Volume and Tone knobs (the latter with a push-pull function for splitting the coils of the humbucker), this setup gives you a wealth of tonal options. Run through two different combos (a Kendrick 4210 and a Dr. Z Z-Lux), and driving a Full-tone Full-Drive 2 pedal for high-gain sounds, the Session LTD proved its ability to range from sparkling clean to massively overdriven, with settings aplenty for jazz, blues, country, fusion, hard rock, etc. The GS-1s are quite robust sounding—the neck unit being particularly cool for throaty blues soloing—and they dish out righteous rhythm textures in combination with the 'bucker in coil-split mode.

Add it all up and the Session LTD is perfect for players who have to cover a variety of styles, and at \$749, it's certainly one of the best deals around in a North American-made guitar.

—ART THOMPSON

MODEL

SESSION LTD

CONTACT	godin.com
PRICE	\$749 street

SPECIFICATIONS

NUT WIDTH	1.69"
NECK	Maple, bolt on
FRETBOARD	Rosewood, 25.5" scale, 12" radius
FRETS	22
TUNERS	Godin die-cast
BODY	Canadian basswood
BRIDGE	Godin Tru-Loc Trem
PICKUPS	Two Godin GS-1 single-coils, Seymour Duncan SH-11 humbucker
CONTROLS	Volume, Tone (w/push-pull coil split for humbucker), 5-way selector
FACTORY STRINGS	010-.046
WEIGHT	8.14 lbs
BUILT	Canada
KUDOS	A fine guitar with a wide range of tones.
CONCERNS	None.



GRETSCH ELECTROMATIC PRO JET

THIS MODERN VERSION OF GRETSCH'S '50s-era rock-and-roll hot-rod features a compact chambered body, Blacktop Filter 'Tron humbuckers in pearloid rings, and classic touches that include "hump-block" fretboard inlays, chrome-plated "G-Arrow" knobs, a white pearloid pickguard with Gretsch logo, threaded/knurled strap buttons, and vintage-style tuners with line-embossed cases. The Bigsby Licensed B50 vibrato with roller bar has a smooth, responsive feel, and it kept the strings in tune quite well when imbuing parts with sweet-sounding bends. The C-shaped maple neck with its 24.6" rosewood 'board feels great and the setup on our review guitar is spot on, providing nice low action and no buzzing when fingering notes as high up on the fretboard as the cutaway allows.

The chambered construction provides a resonant acoustic sound, and when played through a variety of rigs that included a Kendrick 4210 combo, a Dr. Z Z-Lux, and a BluGuitar

Amp 1, the Pro Jet spoke with a crisp, twangy voice that combined humbucker girth with a touch of single-coil shimmer. The moderate output of these lower-wind pickups will appeal to players who gravitate toward PAFs, and they have a dynamic response that's very cool when paired with an overdriven tube amp. You can fake bluesy archtop tones with the meatier neck pickup, while the bridge setting can deliver that Malcolm Young kind of rock attack when driving a high-gain amp channel or a distortion pedal. The system of three Volume knobs makes it easy to dial in hip dual-pickup sounds while controlling overall volume with the Master, however, the lone Tone control likes to be kept wide open as it starts to reduce volume and murk the sound when turned down more than halfway.

That's small point though, in what is one hell-of-a-deal in a swanky looking guitar that harks to the Golden Age of Gretsch electrics.

—ART THOMPSON

MODEL

ELECTROMATIC PRO JET

CONTACT gretschguitars.com

PRICE \$499 street

SPECIFICATIONS

NUT WIDTH	1.69"
NECK	Maple
FRETBOARD	Rosewood, 24.6" scale
FRETS	22
TUNERS	Vintage style
BODY	Chambered basswood with arched laminated maple top
BRIDGE	Bigsby Licensed B50 vibrato
PICKUPS	Two Blacktop Filter 'Trons
CONTROLS	Neck Volume, Bridge Volume, Master Volume, Tone, 3-position selector
FACTORY STRINGS	D'Addario XL110 Regular Light, .010-.046
WEIGHT	7.14 lbs
BUILT	China
KUDOS	Cool look. A twangy sounding rock-and-roll classic
CONCERNS	None.



GUILD S-100 POLARA

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE LOOK, the feel, and the vibe of a vintage-style double-cutaway guitar, the S-100 Polara from Guild's Newark St. Collection series is a serious contender. From a distance, the body style is similar to that of a standard Gibson SG, but upon closer inspection, the S-100 has slightly offset horns, a larger headstock, and an angled tailpiece, giving it a look all its own. Designed to be an exact replication of the original '70s-era S-100, this guitar is built with the same specs, hardware, materials, and electronics in mind.

This will be good news for Soundgarden fans who have heard Kim Thayil play on various S-100s throughout his career. But even if you are interested in playing jazz, country, metal, or something in between, the S-100 is suitable for a wide range of styles, because the guitar is

so responsive to the way you play. The pickups have a lower output than some modern humbuckers, giving the S-100 enhanced depth and clarity. Plugged into a Fender Hot Rod DeVille 212, the S-100 delivered a fantastic clean tone that sounded perky and full with funky or percussive guitar riffs on the bridge pickup, but it could also fill the room with rich sustain on big open chords. Combined with various levels of distortion, notes sang out with zest and punch. Overdriven tones had a classic, midrange-boosted sound that never got overly muddy or bass heavy. Testing this guitar was truly a blast, as it was really comfortable to play and it sounded amazing. Well built with high-quality parts, the S-100 Polara is durable, reliable, and a great choice for adding some vintage flair to any of your performances. —JOYCE KUO

MODEL

GUILD S-100 POLARA

CONTACT	guildguitars.com
PRICE	\$799 street

SPECIFICATIONS

NUT	1 11/16"
NECK	Mahogany, set
FRETBOARD	Rosewood 24.75" scale
FRETS	22 narrow jumbo
TUNERS	Grover Sta-Tite
BODY	Mahogany
BRIDGE	Guild Tune-o-matic, Guild compensated stop tailpiece
PICKUPS	Two Guild HB-1 humbuckers
CONTROLS	Two Volume, two Tone, 3-way selector
FACTORY STRINGS	D'Addario EXL110, .010-.046
WEIGHT	8.81 lbs
BUILT	Korea
KUDOS	Excellent build quality and performance. Classic humbucker tones. Very responsive.
CONCERNS	None.

IBANEZ

STEVE VAI JEM JR.

MODELED AFTER THE POPULAR

Steve Vai Signature JEM, the JEM Jr. is a way more affordable model that doesn't really cut corners on functionality or artistry. Aesthetically, the JEM Jr. features the iconic tree-of-life inlay, the lion claw rout that sits behind the whammy, and the instantly recognizable monkey-grip handle. Before you even plug in to the reversed jack input, it's already a cool-looking guitar that effectively captures the same vibe of the much pricier JEMs.

The Wizard III maple neck on the JEM Jr. is slim, fast, and plays like butter—encouraging a totally relaxing and comfortable playing experience, and providing hours of fun without a hint of fatigue. The standard double-locking tremolo bridge stays in tune, even with extreme dives. Overall, the Quantum single-coil and humbucker pickups sounded fine, although I generally preferred the humbuckers to the single-coil, which sounded a bit too thin for my taste. I would most likely want to try swapping out the factory units for a set of DiMarzio Evolution pickups to cop the tone of the JEM 7V if I wanted to get serious about my Vai obsession. It wouldn't be a necessary expense, however, as the Jr. is still capable of awesome sounds. Bottom line: The JEM Jr. looks good, plays fast, and is by far the most affordable guitar in the Vai Signature series. It really is an exceptional value for the working-class JEM fan. —JOYCE KUO



MODEL

IBANEZ JEM JR.

CONTACT	ibanez.co.jp
PRICE	\$499 street

SPECIFICATIONS

NUT WIDTH	1.693"
NECK	Maple, bolt-on
FRETBOARD	Rosewood, 25.5" scale with tree-of-life inlay
FRETS	24 jumbo
TUNERS	Ibanez
BODY	Mahogany
BRIDGE	Standard DL Double-Locking Tremolo
PICKUPS	Two Quantum humbuckers (bridge and neck), one Quantum single-coil (middle)
CONTROLS	Master Volume, Master Tone, 5-way selector
FACTORY STRINGS	Ibanez, .009-.042
WEIGHT	8.5 lbs
BUILT	Indonesia
KUDOS	Looks cool. Thin and fast neck. Big trem range. Great value.
CONCERNS	Single-coil pickup sounds a bit thin.

ROUNDUP



PEAVEY RIPTIDE

WITH A DALI-ESQUE “MELTED SIDE-ways” take on the Tele body and a raptor-like beak on its headstock, the Riptide lends an edge of contemporary shred attitude to the traditional picker’s plank, and wraps it all in some nifty retro-modern styling with a metallic blue finish and white pearloid pickguard. High-performance elements continue in the fairly thin profile on the five-bolt maple neck, the extremely deep cutaway, and the contoured heel, the latter two combining for an easy reach right up to the 22nd jumbo fret. The two Peavey T-style pickups have alnico magnets and readings in the ballpark for medium-hot-leaning vintage single-coils, and are routed through the traditional control setup. Access to trussrod adjustment is conveniently at the headstock, which carries two roller string trees to aid the steep drop off from nut to the tuners. The bridge is a standard chromed steel Tele dish with three chromed saddles on an unspecified alloy, with through-body stringing.

Despite having a thinner profile than I’d select for myself, the Riptide’s neck sat easily in the hand. The guitar played well right out of

the box, and after just a little tuning instability early on it settled down fine once I’d played it for a while. Fret dress was good, everything functioned just fine, and overall the guitar displayed admirable quality for its price range. Tested through a Tone King Imperial Mk II and a custom JTM45/plexi-style rig, the Riptide’s bridge pickup presented a good blend of twang and growl, with archetypal spanky and scooped tones in the middle position. Both translated well to overdriven rock and pop riffs with an Analogman Prince of Tone OD engaged, with some meaty snarl from the bridge pickup in particular. The neck position was warm and round, with decent snap to it, and worked well for bluesier riffs both semiclean and with the overdrive pedal. All in all, this Peavey delivered very respectable tones that would be recognizable to any Tele fan, and proved a good-value player and performer in its bracket, making it a must-check on the shortlist of any player who digs the Tele simplicity and versatility but wants those fundamentals with some stylistic shake-ups.

—DAVE HUNTER

MODEL

RIPTIDE

CONTACT	peavey.com
PRICE	\$399 street

SPECIFICATIONS

NUT WIDTH	1 5/8"
NECK	Canadian hard rock maple, 25.5" scale
FRETBOARD	Rosewood
FRETS	22 jumbo
TUNERS	Diecast Mini Grovers
BODY	Alder
BRIDGE	Peavey T-style bridge, through-body stringing
PICKUPS	Two Peavey single-coil T-style pickups
CONTROLS	Master Volume and Tone, 3-way switch
FACTORY STRINGS	Peavey, .009-.042
WEIGHT	7.65 lbs
BUILT	Indonesia
KUDOS	Solid build quality, subtly alternative looks, respectable Tele-inspired tones.
CONCERNS	None.



SLICK SL57

SOMETIMES IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS that matter. At first glance, this Slick SL57 might look like just another Strat clone. And, at its insanely low price of \$279, no one could blame you if you assumed that they cut every available corner on materials and workmanship. But you'd be dead wrong, and here's why. The Slick folks, in conjunction with Mr. Earl Slick himself, have addressed every aspect of what separates good guitars from great ones and put that knowledge into each component on their instruments.

You get a solid swamp ash body that is left unfinished so the wood can breathe (and it looks bitchin' too). The bridge features a solid steel baseplate with brass saddles and a massive solid brass sustain block. The nut is graphite and leads to a super straight string pull up the tilt-back headstock (so no need for string trees) to the precise tuners. All of this adds up to amazing sustain and acoustic volume. You can feel each chord ringing through the body.

The amplified tones are exactly what you would want out of a three-single-coil instrument, with big neck-pickup sounds, bright and cutting bridge tones, and the delightfully Knopfler-esque in-between sounds. The only thing I might change is to raise the middle pickup slightly to even out the output on the sounds with that pickup. The medium jumbo frets are nicely polished and easy to bend on. The whammy system arrived set for down-only action, as opposed to floating. This no doubt adds to the resonant quality of the SL57, but it did create some tuning problems, especially on the *D*, *G*, and *B* strings. All non-locking systems take a bit of work for me to keep them reliably in tune, and I'm sure I could tame this one (I would set it up as a floating system so I could always yank everything back to the equilibrium point). None of this changes the fact that this is a great-sounding, great-playing guitar that is an absolute steal at this price. I would not hesitate to bring an SL57 on stage or in the studio. —MATT BLACKETT

MODEL

SLICK SL57

CONTACT	guitarfetish.com
PRICE	\$279 direct

SPECIFICATIONS

NUT WIDTH	1.7"
NECK	Solid Canadian hard rock maple
FRETBOARD	Rosewood 25 1/2" scale and 12" radius
FRETS	22 nickel silver 6105 medium jumbo
TUNERS	Slick with bronze crown gears, bronze pinion gears, and solid brass knobs
BODY	Solid swamp ash
BRIDGE	Vintage USA tremolo with solid steel baseplate, solid machined brass sustain block, and bent brass saddles
PICKUPS	Three Slick "65" alnico single-coils
CONTROLS	Master Volume, two Tone, 5-way toggle
FACTORY STRINGS	D'Addario EXL110
WEIGHT	8.26 lbs
BUILT	China
KUDOS	Cool look. Great sustain. Awesome Stratty tones.
CONCERNS	Whammy system created some tuning issues.

ROUNDUP



SQUIER J MASCIS JAZZMASTER

AS MY FIRST “REAL” GUITAR WAS A 1966 Fender Jaguar, I’ve always had a soft spot for that body style and that part of Fender’s line, which also included the Jazzmaster. (I also love the fact that fewer people have played jazz on a Jazzmaster than have played bass through a Bassman.) One of the greatest proponents of the Jazzmaster is Dinosaur Jr. frontman and purveyor of heavy-ass loudness J Mascis. This Squier signature model looks totally cool with its vintage white finish and gold anodized pickguard. It feels very comfy, thanks to the contoured body and the sturdy, substantial neck. It’s very similar to the Jazzmasters of yore, but the Adjusto-Matic bridge puts a more modern spin on things.

Plugged in, the Jazzmaster just instantly has its own thing going. The single-coil pickups have a great personality that isn’t Stratty but isn’t exactly P-90-ish either. The tones have vibe and depth with a nice clang, and they’re a blast to play either clean or dirty. With the cool

whammy system, this guitar excels at surfy textures when you pour on the reverb, but I loved what it could do for blues, pop, and all but the heaviest rock parts.

All of the above tones were achieved in the Jazzmaster’s “Lead” mode. Kicking the cute little slider switch over gets you into “Rhythm” mode, which is, by design, a darker sound with rolled off treble on the neck pickup only. Level and further treble rolloff are governed by the awesome roller-style thumbwheels. This allows you to have a drastically different tone available at the flick of a switch, but I found this sound to be overly dark, and I would probably only kick it in for wooly-mammoth-style fuzz sounds.

That small quibble aside, this guitar simply reeks of vibe and inspiration. Play a couple of riffs on it and you will definitely see why so many iconic—and iconoclastic—players have done great work on a Jazzmaster. So cool!

—MATT BLACKETT

MODEL

J MASCIS JAZZMASTER

CONTACT	fender.com
PRICE	\$399 retail

SPECIFICATIONS

NUT WIDTH	1.675"
NECK	Maple
FRETBOARD	Rosewood 25 1/2" scale with 9 1/2" radius
FRETS	21
TUNERS	Vintage style
BODY	Basswood
BRIDGE	Adjusto-Matic with vintage-style floating tremolo
PICKUPS	Two Jazzmaster single-coils
CONTROLS	Lead Volume, Tone, 3-way toggle, Rhythm Volume, Tone
FACTORY STRINGS	Fender, .010-.046
WEIGHT	8.5 lbs
BUILT	China
KUDOS	Classic design. Great tones. Instant personality.
CONCERNS	Rhythm circuit might sound too dark for some players.



STERLING JP60 JOHN PETRUCCI SIGNATURE SERIES

WITH A HIGH-QUALITY CHAMELEON finish, the glittering mystic green Sterling JP60 is a show stopper on looks alone. The sleek paint appears to change colors at different angles, creating a visually mesmerizing effect under stage lights.

Although it was designed as a cost-effective alternative for John Petrucci fans on a budget, this guitar shares many of the same attributes as its more affluent brothers, and spares not on functionality and playability.

Right out of the box, the guitar was set up fantastically well, and it was ready to plug in and play with accurate intonation in all positions of the neck. The action is unbelievably low without the slightest hint of fret buzz, making it instantly fun and easy to play. The maple neck is slim and smooth, inspiring fast lead lines, sweep-picking excursions, and clean legato playing. The custom-contoured body

also includes a super cozy forearm scoop. Like the other Petrucci guitars in the signature series, the JP60 features the JP shield inlay on a rosewood fretboard, high-quality locking tuners, and a floating tremolo bridge that was remarkably stable, and could withstand massive pitch shifts in either direction without going horribly out of tune.

The pickups are quite versatile. At the bridge position, the JP60 can deliver squealing pinch harmonics and bright lead tones that sing, sustain, and cut through a mix. The neck pickup offers plenty of power and meaty crunch. Combined with distortion, the guitar is as fierce as it is glittery, and I was pleased to find that the clean tones were clear and full—not at all thin or overly twangy. Of course, the DiMarzio John Petrucci pickups are always an optional add-on, but the factory Sterling pickups definitely pack plenty of sonic value. —JOYCE KUO

MODEL

JP60 JOHN PETRUCCI SIGNATURE SERIES

CONTACT	sterlingbysmusicman.com
PRICE	\$649 street

SPECIFICATIONS

NUT	42mm
NECK	Maple, bolt-on
FRETBOARD	Rosewood, 25.5" scale
FRETS	24
TUNERS	SBMM Locking
BODY	Basswood
BRIDGE	SBMM Trem
PICKUPS	Two SBMM humbuckers
CONTROLS	Master Volume, Master Tone, 3-way selector
FACTORY STRINGS	Ernie Ball Regular Slinky, .010-.046
WEIGHT	7.27 lbs
BUILT	Indonesia
KUDOS	Well-built . Gorgeous finish. Excellent comfort and playability. Wide range of tonal possibilities.
CONCERNS	None.

ROUNDUP



WASHBURN PX-SOLAR V160CK

A NEW ADDITION TO WASHBURN'S

Parallaxe-based Ola Englund Signature Series, the PX-Solar V160CK is broadly inspired by the Flying V, although it shrinks the classic body dimensions and adds comfort with a steep forearm bevel, while making things seamlessly integral across the back with a sculpted and virtually invisible heel at the neck joint. The Duncan Solar humbuckers feed through master Volume and Tone controls with push-pull coil splitting on the latter, and a 3-way switch. I like the recessed Strat-style jack hidden on the back of the lower point in theory, but it leaves the plug rubbing against your lower thigh when the guitar's strapped on (you won't play this thing sitting down, and shouldn't try), and makes it hard to tuck under the strap for safety, too. Otherwise, the feature maintains the sleek lines, as do the matte-black finish, black-chrome hardware, and ebony 'board with lone "Ola Englund" inlay at the 12th fret. Through-body stringing via a Tune-o-matic and Mini Grover tuners up past the black graphite Buzz Feiten Tuning System nut complete the feature set. No surprise finding a super-slim neck here, and playability was

excellent right up to the 24th jumbo fret.

Tested through a custom JTM45/plexi-style amp with a Z.Vex Box of Rock and an Earth-Quaker Devices Musket Fuzz to ramp up the fun factor, the PX-Solar V160CK exuded precisely the slash-and-burn rhetoric you'd expect from a guitar of this styling. Through the amp set just to the edge of natural breakup, the bridge pickup had a nasal, midrangey squawk that was begging me to crank the gain or step on a drive pedal. Once I had succumbed, this position elicited sledgehammer crunch with a tactile dimension that worked great for classic rock at lower gain levels, with easy thrash and metal lead tones when set to scorch. The neck pickup delivered chewy, rich tones that worked better than the bridge clean, inspiring sweet slow-burn ballad leads and easy blues-rock, while going all thick and menacing through fuzz or distortion. Popping up the tone knob introduced a spanky, percussive split-coil tone that was thinner than a good traditional single-coil, but useful nonetheless. The PX-Solar V160CK is a rock machine through and through, and it does its job with pride. —DAVE HUNTER

MODEL

PX-SOLAR V160CK

CONTACT	washburn.com
PRICE	\$649 street

SPECIFICATIONS

NUT WIDTH	1 11/16"
NECK	Maple, 25.5" scale
FRETBOARD	Ebony
FRETS	24 super jumbo
TUNERS	Mini Grover
BODY	Mahogany
BRIDGE	Tune-o-matic with through-body stringing
PICKUPS	Seymour Duncan Solar HB114N & HB114B humbuckers
CONTROLS	Master Volume and Tone controls, push-pull coil splitting, 3-way switch
FACTORY STRINGS	D'Addario XL-120, .009-.042
WEIGHT	7.2 lbs
BUILT	Indonesia
KUDOS	Looks and tones that are equally eviscerating in a well-constructed and fluidly thought-out rock machine.
CONCERNS	Recessed rear jack maintains styling but might be awkward for some playing positions.



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TEST DRIVE



Custom Shop AK 1974S



German Pro Series Phil XG Artist Model



German Pro Series Mayfield Legacy



New Framus

German Pro Series & Custom Shop Models

TESTED BY MICHAEL MOLENDRA

COMMON WISDOM WOULD

recommend that you don't mess with perfection, but Framus can't seem to keep from continually retooling its impeccable construction formula. These are guitars that are typically so exquisitely built that it's almost a downer to review them, because there are only so many superlatives you can use before readers start thinking you've either lost your critical footing, or are somehow on the Framus payroll.

Well, we're not—taking kickbacks from shadowy agents of Framus, that is—nor am I comfortable believing that myself and the other *GP* editors have been rendered incapable of credible and unbiased product evaluations. But one lives by perceptions in our imperfect world, and, let's face it, our only real check-and-balance for all the excellent Framus reviews published by this magazine is for readers to try some of the models themselves.

It's a good time to take that plunge, because Framus recently "messed" with its guitar line by introducing an improved German Pro Series. What they could have actually improved upon is a very good question indeed, but the

new series includes high-quality seasoned woods, Invisible Fret Technology, fluorescent side dots on fretboards, Seymour Duncan pickups, Tone Pros and Graph Tech hardware, and a Rockbass Starline gig bag—all team built and inspected in the Framus factory in Markneukirchen, Germany. Some of these features have been seen on past models, but it seems that everything has now been integrated under the German Pro Series banner.

Framus sent us two German Pro Series instruments—a Mayfield Legacy and a Phil XG Artist—as well as a Custom Shop AK 1974S for our final issue of 2015. It's no surprise that there were no surprises. The guitars are built like finely-tuned watches, sound great, and look stunning. They're also expensive—which is why you don't see a lot of Framus headstocks milling around the average club gig in the hands of the average club band. But these guitars are much like a hand-tooled Aston Martin Rapide S sedan. If you can't afford one, it's still a gas to look and dream, and if you do have the budget to snatch one up, it will certainly be worth every penny spent.

FRAMUS

CUSTOM SHOP AK 1974S

A descendent of the Framus Jan Akkerman Signature Model of 1974—and its name is obviously a nod to that original guitar—the AK 1974S blends the girth of a Les Paul with the airy shimmer of a semi-hollow ES-335. It's a good tonal combo plate right there, but the sonic menu is further spiced-up by the guitar's 6-way switch that offers split-coil flavors along with the customary humbucker sounds. I tested the AK 1974S through a Vox AC30, a Mesa/Boogie Stiletto, and an Orange Tiny Terror through a Mesa/Boogie 1x12, and the armory of sounds was impressive. You can dial in warm low end for jazzy riffs, some spank for country pickin', hollow mids for modern shred, gritty overdrive for all styles of rock, and enough off-kilter tones for moments of surprise. For those who actually adjust their Tone knobs, there's a fair amount of sweep in the AK 1974S' Tone control to add even more colors to wherever you park the rotary switch. It's hard to believe you'd ever run out of tonal options with this machine.

The workmanship is flawless, of course—right down to the rounded, “hot dog end” frets. (Love those, love those, love those.) Playability is excellent, but this is an almost 9.5 lb slab of wood, steel, and electronics, so if you've



neglected to keep up with your calisthenics, don't expect to tour the world with the AK 1974S across your shoulder without causing yourself some hurt. Of course, it will be difficult to put this beauty down, as it provides so many wonderful sounds, feels so good to play, and looks so gorgeous. But, yeah, you've been warned.

GERMAN PRO SERIES MAYFIELD LEGACY

All of the Mayfields we've tested throughout

the years have been exceptional semi-hollow-bodies. This one has a nice, old-school vintage vibe to it, with its P-90s and a groovy “Built in the heart of Saxony” sticker positioned inside the body under the top f hole. Very cool. The Legacy's clean tones are absolute mind blowers. Every note has a warm pop that's simultaneously sensual and articulate. Good trick that one. There's also an acoustic-like shimmer to the highs, as well as solid midrange tones with no edginess or grit. It almost seems like sacrilege

MODEL

CUSTOM SHOP AK 1974S

CONTACT framus.com
PRICE \$5,599 street

SPECIFICATIONS

NUT	1 11/16" Graph Tech Black Tusq Low Friction
NECK	25.5" scale, flamed maple, set
FRETBOARD	Tiger stripe ebony
FRETS	24 jumbo (Plek finished)
TUNERS	Graph Tech Ratio Locking
BODY	AAAA flamed-maple top, AAA back and sides
BRIDGE	Tone Pros Tune-o-matic
PICKUPS	Two Seymour Duncan SH-1 59
CONTROLS	Master Volume, Master Tone, 6-way rotary selector
FACTORY STRINGS	Cleartone, .009-.046
WEIGHT	9.47 lbs
BUILT	Germany
KUDOS	Excellent build quality. Versatile tones.
CONCERNS	None.

MODEL

GERMAN PRO SERIES MAYFIELD LEGACY

PRICE \$2,799 street

SPECIFICATIONS

NUT	1 11/16" Graph Tech Black Tusq Low Friction
NECK	24.75" scale, mahogany, set
FRETBOARD	Rosewood
FRETS	22 jumbo (Plek finished)
TUNERS	Graph Tech Ratio Locking
BODY	Laminated mahogany top and back, solid mahogany sides
BRIDGE	Tone Pros Tune-o-matic
PICKUPS	Two Seymour Duncan Vintage P-90
CONTROLS	Two Volume, two Tone, 3-way selector
FACTORY STRINGS	Cleartone, .010-.046
WEIGHT	6.61 lbs
BUILT	Germany
KUDOS	Excellent build quality. Great tones.
CONCERNS	Some sharp fret ends.

MODEL

GERMAN PRO SERIES PHIL XG ARTIST MODEL

PRICE \$2,499 street

SPECIFICATIONS

NUT	1 11/16" Graph Tech Black Tusq Low Friction
NECK	24.75" scale, mahogany, set
FRETBOARD	Rosewood
FRETS	24, small/high nickel silver
TUNERS	Graph Tech Ratio Locking
BODY	Mahogany
BRIDGE	Tone Pros Tune-o-matic
PICKUPS	Arcane Inc. PX8 humbucker
CONTROLS	Master Volume, master Tone, 3-way toggle switch for parallel/single-coil/series
FACTORY STRINGS	Cleartone, .010-.046
WEIGHT	8 lbs
BUILT	Germany
KUDOS	Excellent build quality. Super-aggro rock tones.
CONCERNS	Some sharp frets.

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~ Daryl Stuermer
(Genesis)

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~ Luther Dickinson
(NM Allstars, Black Crowes)

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~ Mark Tremonti
(Alter Bridge, Creed)

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~ Audley Freed
(Black Crowes, Cry of Love)

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(Zac Brown Band)

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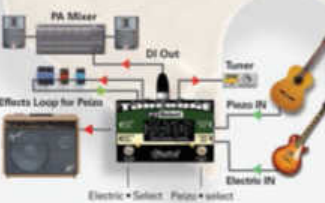
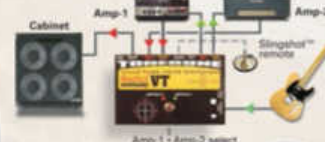
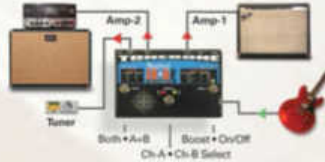
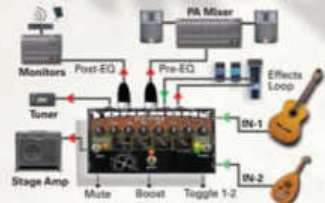
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to sully this baby with overdriven and distorted sounds, but if you so dare, you'll still get round, balanced, and clear note articulation. The Seymour Duncan P-90s are dynamic pickups that translate pick attacks accurately, so you can really use your fingers to create different tones, as well. The fleshy pads of your fingers, fingernails, and various picks in different materials are reproduced with excellent clarity. Call it your secret weapon. In any case, it's a blast to experiment and see what types of sounds the Legacy can deliver.

This is going to make me sound like a total jerk, but I was a little giddy to find that the frets on the Legacy were a bit sharp. Shock! You typically don't discover any such anomalies with a Framus. [*Framus states that our test models were some of the first off of their production line, and that the frets have been corrected on all instruments since.*] Otherwise, the workmanship was the usual Framus rating of awesome. For some reason—perhaps due to the fact that the Legacy has a 24.75"-scale neck as opposed to the 25.5" scales of the AK 1974S and Phil XG—the tuning

machines on this guitar turned like churned butter. They were so smooth that I felt like doing a bunch of alternate tunings, just to keep running my fingers on the buttons.

The Mayfield Legacy certainly proves itself to be well-dressed and sophisticated when armed with P-90s. If you adore clean tones, this may be the guitar that keeps you in bliss forevermore.

GERMAN PRO SERIES PHIL XG ARTIST MODEL

Canadian session guitarist Phil X (Xenidis) jumped into one heck of a limelight when he replaced Richie Sambora in Bon Jovi in 2013. (To me, this is *almost* as cool as his coaching the actresses in the 2001 *Josie and the Pussycats* movie, but I'm weird.) For his signature model, Phil helped design a stripped-down number with one overwound alnico 8 humbucker made expressly for him by Arcane Inc. (Framus offers the guitar with other pickup choices, and even a Bigsby), but we tested the Phil-approved model.) This guitar had a beautiful, natural-stain mahogany

finish. Construction was mostly superb with first-rate hardware—although, as with the Mayfield, I found a few sharp frets. The satin-finished neck has a thick contour, but it's comfortable to play, and if you're a burner, it gives your fingers a high-octave place to shred.

Thanks to the parallel/single-coil/series configuration of the 3-way selector, you can get a fair amount of tones out of the single humbucker, as long as you keep in mind that Phil designed this guitar for heavy rock sounds. It definitely roars with ballsy, tight, and snappy tones in all positions. The master Tone has enough of a sweep to allow some warm, low-midrange sounds, but you can forget about any jazz or faux-jazz tones—this monster was not designed for tuxedo music!

The Phil XG is a simple and aggressive take on the SG formula. It has all of that high-end Framus quality, but it's like an Armani suit or a red-carpet gown with a road-beaten leather jacket over it. Nothing stops this machine from uncorking some gritty and wonderfully dangerous snarls and growls. Rock on! **B**



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30th Anniversary
Custom 24

McCarty

PRS 30th Anniversary Custom 24 and McCarty

TESTED BY ART THOMPSON

HAVING BEEN PRODUCING FINE GUITARS for three decades now, PRS is celebrating its legacy with the release of the 30th Anniversary Custom 24. This instrument follows on the lines of the 24-fret carved top solidbody that was so highly acclaimed when it debuted back in 1985,

but is now equipped with new 85/15 pickups—uncovered humbuckers that offer extended high- and low-end response to better suit modern players—and a lovely cosmetic treatment that includes purfling on the fretboard and headstock and “30th Anniversary” mother-of-pearl Birds

inlays. And while we’re on the subject of PRS’s past achievements, why not include the new McCarty? This classic revisits the model from 1994 that Smith designed in honor of Ted McCarty, the electric guitar pioneer who was Gibson’s president during the company’s “golden era” of 1950–1966.



I spoke with Paul Smith during the course of this review, and asked him about his ongoing pursuit of tone and what drives him to continue refining the PRS guitar line. "If I didn't always try to make them better I'd be a dead man," he replied. "If a guy's at a session or he's waiting to go onstage, and there's a bunch of instruments in the rack, which ones do they go for? If they don't go for mine then I haven't done my job. But we only change the things that we think will make a difference to our artists. The basic neck shape that we started with hasn't changed because it works. The body shape has always worked, and the tremolo bridge is just a modification of an old thing that had grace, but it had a few problems: The saddles would move and the bridge wouldn't return to same spot. The bars would also break off in the block. I just solved the problems and continued on with it. It's pretty much the exact same bridge from 1985. Of course, while I'm sitting here talking to you, I'm playing with a new bridge that

has a locking saddle. So yeah, I have thought about changing it."

One of the things that Smith has poured a ton of work into over the last several years is his PAF-style humbuckers, which were originally introduced as the 57/08 and 59/09 units, and have now morphed into the 85/15 and 58/15 models that are optimized for enhanced clarity and midrange focus. "We've got a whole bunch of magic pickups from history here, and we think the 58/15 beats them all," says Smith. "We finally found out what Seth Lover was thinking when he made the PAF. It took a long time to figure that out because all PAFs are a little different."

The need to stay ahead of the curve in the guitar business is essential to Smith, who routinely evaluates the performance of his company and makes improvements where he and his team see fit. "I think we're more nimble now than we were three years ago, because the R&D department jumps on things like a dog on meat. I got lapped once. I thought everything was fine,

MODEL

30TH ANNIVERSARY CUSTOM 24

CONTACT	prsguitars.com
PRICE	\$3,299 street

SPECIFICATIONS

NUT WIDTH	1.69"
NECK	Mahogany, Pattern Thin (Pattern Regular also available)
FRETBOARD	Rosewood, 25" scale
FRETS	24
TUNERS	PRS Phase III Locking
BODY	Mahogany with carved figured maple top
BRIDGE	PRS Tremolo
PICKUPS	85/15 Bass and Treble humbuckers
CONTROLS	Volume, Tone, 5-way pickup selector
FACTORY STRINGS	PRS, .010-.046
WEIGHT	7.54 lbs
BUILT	USA
KUDOS	Excellent tone and playability. Beautiful appearance.
CONCERNS	None.

McCARTY

CONTACT	prsguitars.com
PRICE	\$3,899 street, as tested with optional "10" top

SPECIFICATIONS

NUT WIDTH	1.69"
NECK	Mahogany, Pattern profile
FRETBOARD	Rosewood, 25" scale
FRETS	22
TUNERS	PRS Phase III Locking
BODY	Mahogany with carved figured maple top
BRIDGE	PRS Stoptail
PICKUPS	58/15 Bass and Treble humbuckers
CONTROLS	Volume, Tone (push-pull), 3-way pickup selector
FACTORY STRINGS	PRS, .010-.046
WEIGHT	7.28 lbs
BUILT	USA
KUDOS	A killer sounding guitar with great pickups and to-die-for playability.
CONCERNS	None.

Gear

PRS

and then I saw somebody pass me and I didn't like it very much. You put your head down and run a little harder after that. When it comes to making sales and keeping people employed, we pay an extraordinary amount of attention to those things. If I can't pay for my people's salaries, I don't have a company. What's hot now—8-strings? And things are changing at an alarming rate. People are trying to expand the instrument and they keep trying to push it out. Eddie Van Halen shows up with a Floyd Rose and life changes. It's just the way it goes. I don't know how Jazzmasters and Jaguars got so hot. We couldn't stand them when we were kids because they didn't sound good. Now you can buy a Jazzmaster with a Tune-o-matic bridge and humbucking pickups. You want to explain that one to me?"

30TH ANNIVERSARY CUSTOM 24

This is the model that made PRS a heavyweight contender in the mid '80s, and it certainly upped the stakes in the guitar market for quality, playability, and tone. The 30th Anniversary edition celebrates the tradition of this erstwhile

"production custom," which immediately captures the eye with its beautiful Azul Blue top and exposed edge "binding" that's long been a signature element of PRS guitars. The bridge is a super smooth PRS Tremolo with gold anodized saddles on a nickel-plated base, and at the opposite end are PRS Phase III locking tuners with gold buttons. The slim mahogany neck is topped with a rosewood 'board that's adorned with pearl Birds inlays and white purfling—an inlaid strip that runs along the entire top surface of the fretboard. The headstock has a matching rosewood overlay with purfling and a "30th Anniversary" scripted trussrod cover.

As usual, the workmanship is excellent in all areas and the playability rules thanks to finely finished frets and a first-rate setup. All components work well together to give the 30th Anniversary Custom 24 a sound that's kind of a mix between carved-top solidity and the airier character of a vibrato-equipped guitar. The 85/15 pickups' enhanced brightness is balanced by firm lows and a bold midrange presence. Tested

with a Dr. Z Z-Lux, a Kendrick 25th Anniversary 4210 combo, and a BluGuitar Amp 1 through an Alessandro 1x12 cabinet, the Custom 24 delivered tones that ranged from fat and bluesy in the neck setting to slimmer/funkier in the split-coil settings (positions 2 and 4) to big and open with both pickups active to tight and grinding in the bridge position. This guitar sustains well and it really sang when driving into the Amp 1's high-gain channel or a good distortion pedal like the Alairex HALO. In all, it's easy to see why so many high-profile players have made the Custom 24 their go-to guitar, and why it remains a "modern classic" in the truest form.

MCCARTY

As the original Les Paul challenger in the PRS line of the mid '90s, the McCarty owed its genesis to the time Smith was able to spend with ex-Gibson president Ted McCarty, who passed away in 2001. "I interviewed him until he started repeating stories," says Smith. "I wanted to know everything that happened in that old factory, and I went

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PORTRAITS IN TONE

Richie Kotzen RK5

Not just another version of the Fly Rig® simply bearing his name, the Richie Kotzen RK5 Signature Fly Rig was a close, year-long collaborative effort. Meticulous about every facet of his playing, singing, songwriting and tone, Richie's attention to the details of this pedal was nothing less.

What distinguishes the RK5 from the Fly Rig 5 is Richie's Signature OMG overdrive. Tuned specifically to Richie's ear, the OMG section brings in the organic Class A-style distortion, but with a tighter, snappier response. It is designed to articulate every nuance of Richie's dizzying playing style for all modes and moods, from clean to aggressive and from rhythmic chords to infinite sustain when it's solo time.

The RK5 offers the same other essential features as the Fly Rig 5: the all-analog SansAmp™, reverb, delay with tap tempo, and a powerful boost. For fly gigs across the globe, jamming at the local hang, and running off to last minute sessions, just pop your RK5 into your guitar case and head for the door.

photo by greg vorobiov



Actual size: 11.5"l x 2.5"w x 1.25"h • Weight: 18.6 oz.



The Richie Kotzen OMG Signature Overdrive is also available as a stand-alone pedal.

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Gear

PRS

over it and over it with him." The result of all this was a different kind of PRS that featured a slightly thicker mahogany back, a wide-fat mahogany neck with 22 frets, an aluminum Stoptail bridge, vintage-style tuners, and set of vintage voiced Dragon—and soon renamed McCarty—humbuckers. Along with a 3-way pickup selector, the McCarty had a push-pull Tone pot that split the coils for brighter single-coil sounds. With a foundation of carved-top sustain and humbucker girth, the McCarty series expanded in 1998 with Archtop, Hollowbody, and Soapbar versions, and in 2010 it received new 57/08 pickups, a "Pattern" neck, and other upgrades. Limited runs in korina or with Brazilian rosewood necks were also available until the model was discontinued in 2013.

So why did PRS stop making the McCarty? "People quit buying them," says Smith. "They went, 'Okay, we got a McCarty, what else you got?' This market gets really bored fast. I used to think it was just the times, but if you remember, Gibson changed the Les Paul every year: Trapeze tailpiece the first year, stop tailpiece the second

year, neck angle the third year, Tune-o-matic the fourth year. Then came humbucking pickups, then they made it sunburst, and then they turned it into the SG and put on the sideways Vibrola. If you knew how many times we've put our hearts and souls into something, shipped about 200 of them, and then we get a call from someone going, 'Yeah that's great, you got something new?'"

But the McCarty is back, and what a jewel of a reissue it is. The Black Gold Burst finish reveals stunning golden highlights in the figured maple of its "10" top, while the Ivoroid-bound fretboard wears nine "birds in flight" inlays of pearl and abalone. The rosewood-faced headstock sports a "McCarty" inlay on its ebony trussrod cover and on the flip side are a set nickel-plated Phase III locking tuners with exposed brass gears.

Among the McCarty's updates is a more refined Pattern neck shape, which rides in the hand about as nicely as one could imagine. "The neck shape is a little more sophisticated because we have a better program doing it," says Smith. "The nut material is also new. I just think the guitar sounds

a little more open now. I believe you can judge a guitar by how long it rings. A guitar that rings for 10 seconds is not as good as a guitar that rings for 40. Recently, at Chicago Music Exchange, I compared the McCarty with a '58 Les Paul and a '57 Strat. The Strat rang for 51 seconds, the Les Paul for 38 seconds, and the PRS went for 52 seconds."

Played into a Marshall 25/50 Silver Jubilee reissue, a Kendrick 25th 4210 combo, and a BluGuitar Amp 1, the McCarty sounded stringy and complex. The covered 58/15 pickups have the modest output of a good PAF, and they deliver a top end that's bright but not at all shrill. Balanced by deep lows and piano-like sustain, these pickups worked great though all of these amps, and depending on how you deploy the coil-split function on the Tone knob, the McCarty delivers the slinkiest of cleans all the way to the super sustaining neck- or bridge-position distortion tones that embody all that is great about carved-top solids with 22 frets. In all, the McCarty is a badass guitar and a superb choice for a lot of different styles. A welcome return indeed, and it earns an Editors' Pick Award. ■

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STOMPBOX FEVER



3 Holiday Goodies from Boss

TESTED BY MICHAEL MOLENDRA

THE DD-500 DIGITAL DELAY, PW-3 WAH, and RV-6 Reverb debuted at this summer's NAMM show and are hitting the streets just in time for some holiday cheer. And there's no coal in your stocking here—all three would be fantastic additions to any pedalboard.

DD-500 DIGITAL DELAY

The DD-500 (\$299 street) is one enchanting and supercharged gift, because it's basically a full-on delay workstation housed in a stompbox that's bigger than a conventional pedal, but not so big that it usurps all the real

estate on your pedalboard. Yum! The amount of control is off the charts. I'm not a MIDI guy (that's *GP* editor Matt Blackett's area of expertise), but the DD-500 offers MIDI In/Out and all the usual control parameters. You might not need MIDI, however (which makes *me* happy), because you can assign a bounty of controls to the A, B, and TAP/CTL switches, and a jack for an optional expression pedal is also part of the party. Patches can be edited in the box via buttons and knobs, and sent to a computer for patch backup via USB. There's also a phrase looper included along with all the groovy delay

programs. Well, let's cop to it, you'll need to read the manual to really understand all of the power under the DD-500's hood, but I think we can agree right now that there's practically nothing this box can't do when it comes to delay effects.

You get 12 basic delay modes, and pretty much everything you can imagine from analog, tape, and digital types are available (including a Vintage Digital mode—who knew that digital was “vintage” already?—offering '80s Roland classics such as the SDE-2000/SDE-3000 rack units and the Boss DD-2). But that's not all—you



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STOMPBOX FEVER



also get a Tera Echo, as well as Filter, Dual, Special Effects, Pattern, Shimmer, Slow Attack, and Reverse flavors. Every one of them sounds awesome, with articulate, meaty, sensual, strange, or dark tones, depending on the selected patch. And any time I just want to mess something up, the 4-band EQ on each program lets me get into all manner of lo-fi madness. Love it! I could have stayed in Analogland forever—grooving endlessly on the DD-500's Echoplex and Space Echo patches—but I would have cheated myself out of so much more fun.

There's such a tremendous onslaught of

options in the DD-500 that I almost want to make like boxer Roberto Duran facing Sugar Ray Leonard in 1980, and shout, "No mas! No mas!" But, man, what a *glorious* beat down. The DD-500 is definitely a world champion of delay.

Kudos Extreme parameter control. Wonderful sounds. Onboard looper.

Concerns None.

Contact bossus.com

PW-3 WAH PEDAL

Stompbox zealots have got to love the fairly recent downsizing of pedals, simply because it means

you can cram more groove things on a tight pedalboard. The PW-3 (\$119 street)—with its somewhat *Star Wars*-like industrial design—manages to reduce its imprint without making it so small that it becomes a challenge to work the pedal with your foot. I typically like optical, "instant on/off" wahs because I'm a bit clumsy onstage, but the PW-3 calmed my jitters with two features: The footswitch is quick and easy to operate, and two bright LEDs at each side of the pedal alert me that I've actually turned the wah on or off. (I don't want to mention how many times I've managed to leave a conventional wah active when it wasn't supposed to be—"Why is my tone so thin all of a sudden?")

The PW-3 is built as strong as the Death Star, so I can't imagine it succumbing to any road abuse. It's powerable by a 9-volt battery or an optional power adapter. You get two tonal modes, Rich and Vintage, but there's not a super-obvious difference between them—especially when heard from a club stage. There is definitely some more low-midrange content available when you set

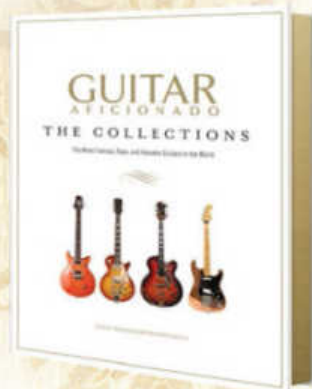
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STOMPBOX FEVER

the switch to Rich, but the pedal's range isn't really wide enough to take full advantage of the added bass frequencies. I did use Rich mode for clean-toned, vocal-like punctuations, and it did a nice job. Vintage mode provides ample lows for rockin' frequency sweeps, and this mode also has a wonderfully sweet bite to the mids, so I tended to keep the pedal here, but that's my taste (I'm a Mick Ronson fan, so the more feral the wah, the better, in my book).

The PW-3 is a real holiday treat. It's a great size, the status LEDs are extremely helpful, and it sounds fabulous live. I definitely see this wah on one of my pedalboards for 2016.

Kudos Super rugged. On/off LEDs. Compact. Good sound.

Concerns None.

Contact bossus.com

RV-6 REVERB

It has been a while since the Compact Pedal series has seen a new reverb. The RV-5 debuted in 2002, offering six options (Spring, Plate, Hall,

Room, Gate, Modulate), and the single-sound FRV-1 '63 Fender Reverb hit the ground in 2009. The RV-6 (\$149 street) really ups the ambience ante with eight different reverbs, and they are all marvelous options in a very easy-to-use pedal. You can operate the RV-6 in mono, mono-to-stereo, or stereo-to-stereo modes (as well as 100-percent wet if you plug into the B input alone), and an EXP jack (for an optional expression pedal) lets you control the effect level by foot—a very cool way to “animate” or orchestrate guitar parts on the fly by raising or lowering the reverb depending on the musical intensity you wish to generate. I also love dialing in huge and lush reverbs, and using the Effect Level to fade the sound ever so slightly into the dry sound. You get the attack, and then this lovely and subtle wash “ghosting” after notes. The Tone and Time knobs are responsive and possess enough parameter sweeps for significant tweaks.

The Room, Hall, and Plate reverbs are on par with most anything you'd hear in a recording studio, and the Spring is splashy enough to make

surf-music aficionados smile. I wasn't a big fan of the spiky and aggressively modulated Shimmer patch, but if you want to add a little weirdness to your performance, this is where to go. The more understated Modulate is magnificent (at least to my ears), and Dynamic can sound like a 1950s-style tin-can reverb—great for punctuating notes with a metallic twang. Although tweakage is limited, the Reverb+Delay is a delightful option to have. I liked using it for spell-like, repeating arpeggios, à la Andy Summers and Robert Fripp on *I Advance Masked*.

The RV-6 definitely puts a lot of reverb power at your feet. Even cooler, if you run out of ambience processors during a studio mixdown or a live-performance mix, the RV-6 sounds clean and vibey enough to plug right into the board. Trust me, no one will bust you for inserting a stompbox into a professional mix. This baby sounds *that* good.

Kudos Good parameter controls. Great sounds. Awesome selection of effects.

Concerns None.

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Teye Gypsy Arrow

TESTED BY MICHAEL MOLEND

ON THE TLC NETWORK'S SAY YES TO the Dress, future brides often pay astronomic fees for what they believe is a drop-dead gorgeous wedding dress. And when they drop a dump truck full of bills on a gown, they typically want something that glitters, glows, sparkles, shines, and oohs and ahhs with extreme, once-in-a-lifetime splendor. Now, switch gears to obsessed guitarists looking for something stunning—*Say Yes to the 6-String*, anyone?—and Teye is one of the manufacturers that promises unconstrained opulence.

But while Teye's ostentatious examples of playable art provide owners with all the "joy of ownership" of an extravagant luxury instrument, they are also relatively attainable (the Gypsy Arrow evaluated here retails for \$4,950, compared to, say, Kim Kardashian's \$400,000 Givenchy gown, or even Chelsea Clinton's \$32,000 Vera Wang), are very well crafted, and they sound amazing. In other words, you probably won't stick your Gypsy Arrow in some vault, as is likely the fate of most pricey wedding dresses.

The Gypsy Arrow's striking, hand-rubbed "shipwreck finish" is adorned with hand-etched aluminum plates on the front, sides, and headstock (there's even a viper engraving on the guitar's backside), and the control knobs, bridge, and tuning pegs are customized to ensure 100-percent conformity with the artistic theme. All hardware is exquisitely rendered, but watch out for the razor spikes on the bridge if you like resting your hand there. (You'll have to endure some pain for the art.) In addition, the fret ends were very sharp, which was unexpected and rather unwelcome on a high-end guitar. Allowing for the fact that it's a V-shape, playability is excellent. The neck is wide and flat, but it's comfortable, and I could happily bash around on the Gypsy Arrow for hours.

Cosmetics aside, Teye has designed a ton of kick-ass sounds into this mean machine, and its tonal diversity is off the charts. I couldn't think of a gig that would cause the Gypsy Arrow to stumble, from jazz, to

classic rock and metal, to funk and blues, to country, and to experimental styles and beyond. The Volume and Tone controls are wide-ranging and responsive, and the guitar reacts brilliantly to picking dynamics. I loved how the dedicated Volumes for each Lollar pickup can blend the stout and warm neck sounds with the gritty bridge tones for subtle—and not-so-subtle—timbral colors. Furthermore, the 5-way selector provides those sexy out-of-phase tones, and the Mojo knob dials in lots of spankin' and snappy midrange frequencies.

The Teye Gypsy Arrow is one of those guitars that really could do *everything* for you. So if it's a bit out of your budget, fear not, because if you cave in and purchase one, it'll likely be the only guitar you'll need for a long, long time. This gypsy has magic, baby! 🎸

MODEL

GYPSY ARROW

CONTACT	teye.com
PRICE	\$4,950 retail

SPECIFICATIONS

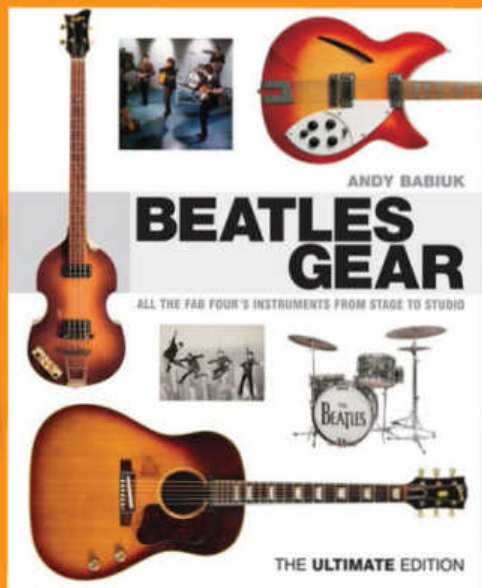
NUT	1.77"
NECK	25.5" scale, Korina, set
FRETBOARD	Ebony
FRETS	24 medium
TUNERS	Grover with custom Teye pegs
BODY	Korina, engraved aluminum plates, "shipwreck" finish
BRIDGE	Custom Teye SuperSustain
PICKUPS	Two custom-wound Lollar humbuckers
CONTROLS	Two Volume, Master Tone, Mojo circuit, 5-way selector
FACTORY STRINGS	D'Addario, .010set
WEIGHT	8.06 lbs
BUILT	USA
KUDOS	Vibe to burn. Versatile tones. Gorgeous.
CONCERNS	Sharp fret ends.

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Truetone V3 Jekyll & Hyde Overdrive-Distortion

WHEN VISUAL SOUND'S BOB WEIL

introduced the Jekyll & Hyde pedal in 1997, he billed it as "the original dual guitar effect pedal." Visual Sound has rebranded itself as Truetone, and one of its initial offerings is the V3 version of this flagship product, which has been redesigned from the ground up by Weil and RG Keen. As stated by the company, the distortion channel (a.k.a. "Hyde") delivers the same great distortion tone that the former Hyde was always known for, but with two major upgrades: a Bass knob that interacts with Treble so you can shape your tone precisely, and a Voice switch that allows you to choose between classic open distortion or a more saturated tone. The overdrive channel (a.k.a. "Jekyll") has been changed completely to make it even more compatible with Hyde. Other upgrades include a "Forever" footswitch rated for ten million cycles (!) that works in conjunction with relays featuring gold-plated contacts. The unit comes with a lifetime warranty that even

extends to second or third owners.

As with other V3 pedals, each channel can be set internally to true or buffered bypass—the latter uses Truetone's Pure Tone circuit and is useful if the V3 is driving into other pedals. A pair of inputs and outputs allows separate on/off control of each side by a loop device or a MIDI switcher. This also permits pushing the Hi-Gain side with the Drive side or vice versa.

The Jekyll & Hyde's Drive channel is a bit more assertive than your typical Screamer-style pedal, and, along with Bass, Tone, and Volume controls, a Clean Mix knob allowed me to blend in some unaffected signal to enhance clarity, or use Drive as a clean boost—either before or after the gain channel. The Hi-Gain side sits firmly in the distortion camp and offers Bass, Treble, and Mid knobs, along with a 2-position Bright switch that, in the "A" setting gives a brighter and less compressed response. Additional sound sculpting is afforded by a Voice switch that selects mid

boost or cut voicings for the Hi-Gain side, with the former position providing more of the original J&H sound and the latter being louder and more open sounding.

Using the Drive and Hi-Gain channels separately and together, I was able to dial in a massive range of dynamic rock tones—from light grit that responded well to picking attack and my guitar's volume control, to full on metal madness. I could conjure classic sounds from AC/DC to the Foo Fighters, as well as some rock-oriented blues tones, and whether I had it set to be Jekyll mild or Hyde monstrous, the results from this versatile pedal were always musical.

—MICHAEL ROSS

Kudos Vast array of distortion tones courtesy of independent Drive and Hi-Gain channels that can be configured to run in tandem.

Concerns None.

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Asher Guitars Resosonic Rambler

TESTED BY MATT BLACKETT

IF YOU'VE CHECKED OUT THE PLAYING of Jackson Browne or Ben Harper, you've heard instruments built by Bill Asher. Asher has been a SoCal fixture for a long, long time and in addition to Harper and Browne, he counts Marc Ford, Redd Volkaert, and a host of other great players as clients. When we visited Asher Guitars at the last NAMM Show, we couldn't help but fall in love with the Resosonic Rambler that you see here.

It's easy to understand why. This is one of the most eye-catching designs of all time. Let's start with the obvious: You get a hand-cut 1958 Nash Rambler hub cap that covers the spun aluminum 9.5" Beard resonator cone. I could basically end this review right here and this instrument would still rule. You also get a sumptuous red finish with super-cool pin striping (done free-hand by artist Jack "Pacman" McCann) on the sexy body. The elegant headstock shape and Lollar Gold Foil pickup round out the cosmetics.

The Rambler showed up with a medium-high action making it possible to both fret chords and play slide. It came tuned to Dobro-style high-G, but you can tune it any way you want. I grabbed a slide and plugged the Asher into a Kendrick 2210 and started playing my brand of gutsy—if slightly out-of-tune—bottleneck licks. I was instantly knocked out by the deep, rich tones that the Rambler is capable of. The Okume body and neck wood, coupled with the Lollar pickup, produces amazing detail. It can be sweet and

pretty or swampy and nasty, but it never loses its articulate voice. And, despite the fact that all you get is a neck-position pickup, there's plenty of treble on hand and I never missed having a bridge or middle pickup. It also sounds righteous acoustically before you ever plug it in.

The Volume control on the Rambler is beautifully voiced, with usable sounds throughout its range. That made the instrument all the more flexible, because I could easily dial in a distorted tone on the amp and get anything from clean to dirty with volume adjustments. The Tone control is another thing entirely. Underneath the knob (which looks just like the knobs on my old Fender Champ) there lurks a ToneStyler circuit, which gives you ten different roll-off points to fine-tune your tone. This makes it a breeze to compensate for a bright amp, turn a punchy rhythm tone into a warm and wooly lead tone, or create a subtly different sound for an over-dub. A very cool bonus.

Asher takes pains to intonate the maple and ebony saddle, which is really important for keeping the fretted notes sweetly in tune. Not every maker does this, and it makes a big difference. And although this is a roundneck instrument—not a squareneck—and is designed to be played like a guitar, I had a blast playing it lap-style (with a Dunlop Ben Harper signature bar, no less) and butchering licks from my Rob Ickes lesson.

The Resosonic Rambler is an incredibly inspiring instrument to play. My slide chops are not great but this guitar makes me want to practice and get better. Bill Asher is a master craftsman who makes incredibly hip works of art. If you get a chance to try a Rambler, do so and you'll see. ▶

MODEL

RESOSONIC RAMBLER

CONTACT	asherguitars.com
PRICE	\$2,985 retail

SPECIFICATIONS


NUT WIDTH	1 11/16"
NECK	Quartersawn Okume
FRETBOARD	Indian rosewood 25 1/2" scale
FRETS	22 Dunlop 6155
TUNERS	Hipshot 18-1 ratio
BODY	Slab cut Okume
BRIDGE	Biscuit
PICKUPS	One Lollar Gold Foil
CONTROLS	Volume, ToneStyler tone circuit
FACTORY STRINGS	D'Addario, .011-.049
WEIGHT	5.75 lbs
BUILT	USA
KUDOS	Beautiful design. Great range of tones. Super inspiring.
CONCERNS	None.

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WHACK JOB



1967 Teisco/Silvertone ET-460 K4L

BY TERRY CARLETON

"MERRY CHRISTMAS, TERRY."

"Gee, Mom and Dad, it's a Sears Silvertone. Um, you shouldn't have. Really. *You shouldn't have.*"

"Well, Merry Frickin' Christmas, you little ingrate!"

If you were a guitar-obsessed youngster during the musical British Invasion of the early '60s, you'd consider yourself lucky to get *any* electric guitar for the holidays—no matter what the brand, or whether it came from Sears, JC Penny, or Montgomery Ward. But, really, you could have done way worse than opening a gift box and seeing this Teisco ET-460 K4L back in the wild, experimental days of the 1960's guitar boom.

The 1967 ET-460 (a.k.a. "Model 1437") was manufactured in Japan by Teisco and sold through Sears department stores wearing the Silvertone brand. Also known as the "Sharkfin," this model was a more serious instrument than most of Teisco's offerings, which were often cheap and junky—but affordable—guitars that typified the negative aspects of the phrase, "Made in Japan."

WEIRDO FACTOR

The shape is a bit unorthodox, but no crazier

than, say, a Vox Phantom or a Gibson Explorer. And yet, the Sharkfin's four sharply rectangular pickups, along with its flank of buttons and knobs, showcases a guitar that might be trying a bit too hard. And then, there's the striped aluminum pickguard that may or may not be echoing the striped shirts of the early Beach Boys. Perhaps the Japanese designers were dreaming of Southern California, and wanted to produce the perfect guitar for a '60s B-movie about clean-cut surfers and pool parties?

PLAYABILITY & SOUND

My holiday duo—red metal flake and greenburst (still with a lustrous shine after almost 50 years)—have beautiful, German-style carved tops and conform quite comfortably to your body, as well as rosewood fretboards with 22 skinny frets that make the guitars very easy to play. The tremolo bars are stiff, and they only travel about a half-step, but they do come back to pitch accurately.

There are on/off switches for each of the four pickups that, unfortunately, produce electronic clunks when you use them. A Rhythm and Solo control makes the sound brighter and louder.

The bridge pickup is fairly hot and surf-y, but the other three pickups sound just so-so. Still, you can find some unique sounds by mixing and matching them. The pickups are also seriously microphonic, making them a blast to use if you love Link Wray-inspired noise and feedback.

VALUE

In the '60s, Teiscos sold for between \$80 and \$150 dollars, which was about half of what Fenders were selling for. Today, the Sharkfin is considered collectible, and I've seen them sell online for between \$600 and \$1,200.

WHY IT RULES

This is not a great guitar, but it's a good guitar that you can use to make a lot of meaningful music. With a good setup, guitars like these Teiscos can provide you with some attention-getting sounds while making a very cool fashion statement. And when you have holiday parties to play, think of the giddy joy you'd spread around by carrying these red and green beauties onstage like some rockin' Santa Claus! ➤



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QUICK HISTORIES OF THE ROOTS OF GUITAR LUST



1968 Vox Clyde McCoy Wah-Wah

BY DAVE HUNTER

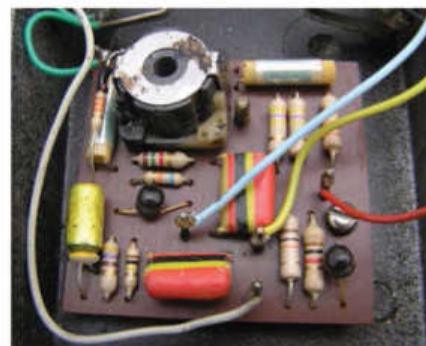
HUGELY POPULAR IN A BROAD SPECTRUM

of genres, the wah-wah pedal was a major hit from very shortly after its commercial release in 1966, but few pieces of classic gear have likely had as convoluted a journey to stardom as this simple tone filter. Created by an engineer working for a California organ company that had just acquired the rights to a British amplifier brand name, this pedal was designed to help rock guitarists mimic the sound of a famous jazz trumpeter's mute technique... and would be manufactured in Italy. It reads like a location scout's itinerary for the next James Bond film. When Bradley Plunkett concocted his first wah-wah circuit for Thomas Organ in 1965, though, and trumpeter Clyde McCoy put his stamp of approval on the results, you can bet they had little thought as to how Eric Clapton and Jimi Hendrix would soon make them sound in front of snarling fuzz pedals into cranked Marshall stacks.

When you consider the few truly spacey sonic-melding effects available at the time, the iconic Vox "Clyde McCoy" Wah-Wah must have sounded pretty amazing in its day even

through a clean amp. Give it some gain or fuzz it up, though, and these things make the electric guitar exponentially more expressive, hence their lasting appeal. For all its relative simplicity there are still few comparable means of making a guitar sound so vocal, malleable, emotive, and dynamic as this brick-sized rocker pedal. Part of the reason for that, of course, is that you *play* the wah-wah while playing the guitar—its electro-mechanical nature adding an extra dimension to your overall musical expressivity—and you have to *work it* to make it work. Whether sweeping broadly and rhythmically for funky rhythm playing (another of this pedal's fortes) or finding the precise edge-of-shift spot where it grinds the note from a bent guitar string into a soulful vocal howl, a great wah-wah will do things a guitar just can't do on its own, or through any other effect for that matter.

Stages in the early evolution of the Vox Wah-Wah from 1966 through the end of the decade came in rapid succession, and the story is too convoluted to tell in detail in the space allowed here. But all of the late-'60s renditions can sound



Clyde's guts—a "halo" inductor and "tropical fish" caps.

superb. Having been devised by the Thomas Organ branch of the Vox empire (whose overuse of the Vox brand on inferior California-made tube and solid-state amps would soon help to put the original English JMI company out of business), wah-wah production was jobbed out to Jen Elettronica in Pescara, Italy, which was manufacturing other transistorized pedals for JMI at the time. After the original "Patent Pending" pedal of 1966, 1967 saw the "picture" model, designated by the reprint of Clyde McCoy's portrait on the bottom plate, followed in 1968 by the "signature" model, which carried just his name in script. That year also saw the arrival of the Cry Baby Wah-Wah, which was often considered the pedal for US distribution, although it was also sold in the UK as the Vox Cry Baby Wah-Wah.

The most desirable early units used the distinctive "halo" inductor (so called for its circular metal housing) and a pair of distinctive, striped "tropical fish" capacitors. These were *not* true bypass pedals, so the circuit tended to suck tone even when disengaged—a fact that has inspired many modern owners to modify their originals with new DPDT switches. Plug in, rock it, and rock. For nearly 50 years there's been no better way to get your groove on! 🎸

ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS

- Rocker treadle for wah-wah control
- Tropical fish signal capacitors
- Halo inductor
- Simple hand-wired circuit

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Craig Anderton on Technology

Designer Guitar Jacks



“Smart” plugs (left to right)—Assembled UltimatePLUG and TimbrePLUG, and the SilentPLUG components. Note the sheath around the UltimatePLUG and SilentPLUG base, which provides the switching action.

QUARTER-INCH PHONE plugs aren’t glamorous. You plug one end into your guitar, the other into some electronic device—done. But Neutrik, known for its professional connectors, has an interesting take on the kinds of functions you can bundle into plugs.

Neutrik makes three plugs specifically for guitar: SilentPLUG (\$10 street), TimbrePLUG (\$20 street), and UltimatePLUG (\$35 street). These are intended for do-it-yourselfers, either to retrofit an existing plug or serve as the basis for creating your own cable. However, the SilentPLUG is available on some manufactured cables from companies like Mogami, ProCo, and Gotham. (Also note that Neutrik isn’t

alone—Switchcraft, G&H, and Gibson have their own noiseless plug designs.)

WHAT THEY DO

If you switch guitars on stage, SilentPLUG is great. It shorts the hot conductor to the shield until plugged in fully to your guitar, so there’s no buzz or pop when you plug in. Neutrik offers both straight and right-angle SilentPLUG models.

TimbrePLUG emulates the effect of cable capacitance. This may seem silly, but knowingly or not, many guitarists rely on cable capacitance for their tone, and using shorter cables with devices such as audio interfaces or wireless body packs changes the tonal quality. TimbrePLUG

incorporates a small four-position rotary switch, where one position includes no capacitance, and the other three add in different amounts of capacitance.

UltimatePLUG combines the TimbrePLUG switch with the SilentPLUG noiseless feature.

TimbrePLUG and UltimatePLUG are available as right-angle types only, so they’re ideal with SG and 335-type guitars with front-facing jacks. However, I also tested the plugs with Strat- and Les Paul-type jacks, and they fit fine. If the TimbrePLUG feels a little clumsy plugged in to your guitar, it can plug into your interface, body pack, etc., with a standard plug going into your guitar. However, the SilentPLUG or

UltimatePLUG must plug into your guitar for the silent switching feature to work.

ASSEMBLY

Of the three, SilentPLUG requires minimal soldering and construction chops. The plug barrel and plastic cable sheath both have semi-circular tabs (see photo), and as long as you line them up, you won’t have any issues.

The other two are more finicky to assemble, depending on the shielded-cable thickness: 1/4" diameter is the absolute maximum, and a thinner cable makes life easier. It’s important to follow the assembly instructions, which are downloadable from the Neutrik site if you want to see what’s involved.

When using a thicker cable, loosening the two halves of the plug rather than screwing them down tightly makes it easier to insert the chuck that restrains the cable and the screw-in bushing. After tightening down the two halves, trying to pull the cable out of the plug would probably snap the wire before detaching it from the plug.

BOTTOM LINE

You *can* teach old plugs new tricks—and it just might be time to warm up your soldering iron.

Craig Anderton has played on or produced more than 20 major label releases, mastered hundreds of tracks, and written dozens of books. Check out some of his latest music at youtube.com/thecraiganderton. ■

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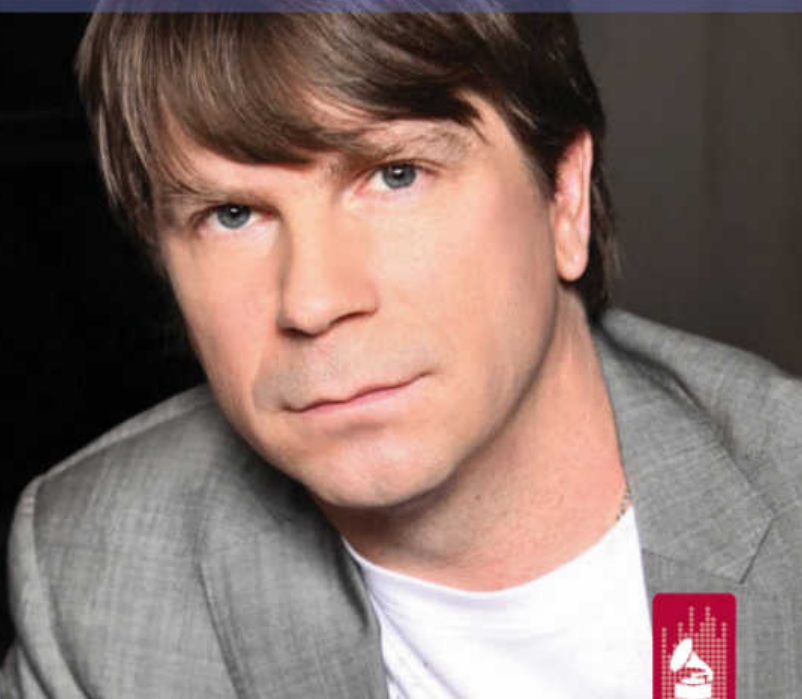
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Steve Hunter on Classic Sessions

“Rock & Roll”

DURING THE REHEARSAL and pre-production stage prior to our going into the studio to record the Detroit album, [producer] Bob Ezrin asked us to bring in whatever songs we wanted to do on the album—especially any original songs. I had tried my hand at writing, but I hadn’t really come up with anything good. I needed more experience. Detroit’s frontperson, Mitch Ryder, brought in a cover tune he liked called “Rock & Roll,” which was written by Lou Reed and performed by the Velvet Underground. He thought we could do a more rockin’ version of the song. For some reason, that thought stuck in my mind.

One evening, Charlie Auringer—one of the staff photographers at *Creem* magazine—knocked on my door and asked if I would like to come with him to the East Town Theater in downtown Detroit to see Mountain. He was going to shoot the concert, and he had a spare pass. As I was a huge Mountain fan, I jumped at the chance to see them live.

They were incredible! The whole band was on fire, but guitarist Leslie West and his awesome vibrato were over the top. They ended up getting seven encores that night. For one of those encores, Leslie came out by himself, and did this incredibly beautiful Volume-knob stuff that sounded like a cello. He got an amazing tone out of his Gibson Melody Maker and those big Sunn amps. It was without a doubt, one of the best rock and roll shows ever.



CHRISTIAN ROSE / DALLE / RETNA LTD.

Lou Reed’s recording of “Rock & Roll” inspired Hunter to come up with a “more rockin’” arrangement.

I was wired and inspired after seeing that great band.

A day or two after seeing Mountain, I was listening to Reed’s version of “Rock & Roll.” I liked it. There was something very cool about the song itself and the lyrics. I grabbed my guitar, learned the changes, and sat playing it over and over trying to come up with some ideas on how to rock it up more, but still keep the essence

of the song. And then I had a thought: “I wonder how Mountain would play this song?” All of a sudden, a Mountain-type riff came out, and the whole arrangement simply poured out of me. I was very excited to show it to the guys.

When we played it at rehearsal the next day, and Mitch started singing it, the song came alive with all kinds of power. It was an amazing feeling to hear

something I had done actually work, and work better than I had thought it would. Bob loved it. He made a few changes and additions, and the Detroit version of “Rock & Roll” was added to the list of songs to be included on our album.

Now, for the amazing part. After the album was released, Reed himself heard the Detroit version of “Rock & Roll,” and was knocked out. He tracked down Bob Ezrin, said he wanted him to produce his next album, and he wanted me to play on it. The next thing I know, I’m on a plane to London to record Lou’s *Berlin*—which was just the second album I had worked on. But that’s another story to come.

One more amazing thing: Many years later, I finally got to meet Leslie West. He told me people had come up to him when Detroit’s version of “Rock & Roll” came out, and told him how much they loved Mountain’s new single. I guess I got closer to Mountain than I thought!

Sometimes called “The Deacon,” Steve Hunter is an American guitarist best known for his collaborations with Peter Gabriel, Lou Reed, and Alice Cooper. Hunter has played some of the greatest riffs in rock history, including the opening solos on Aerosmith’s version of “Train Kept A-Rollin’” and Alice Cooper’s “Cold Ethyl,” and the acoustic intro to Peter Gabriel’s “Solsbury Hill.” He also wrote the legendary “Intro” for Lou Reed’s 1973 live version of “Sweet Jane.” ■

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- Scott Henderson



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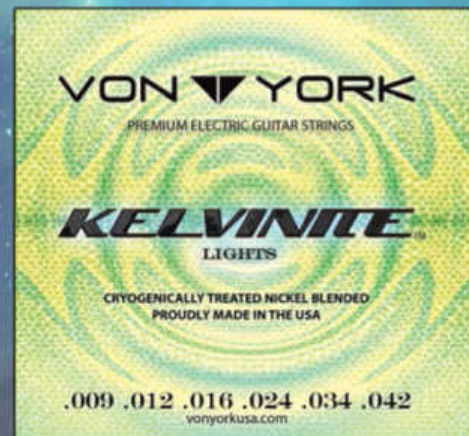
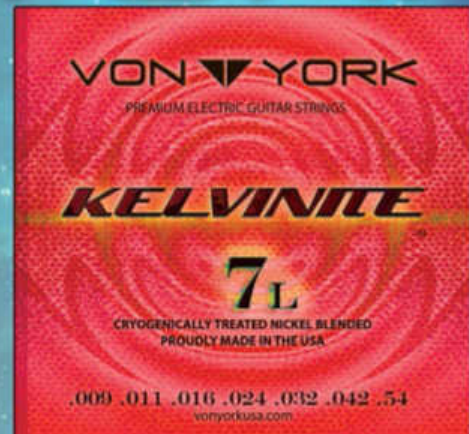
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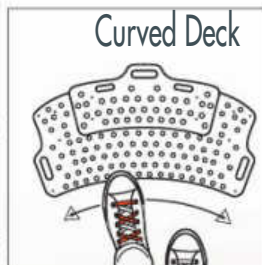
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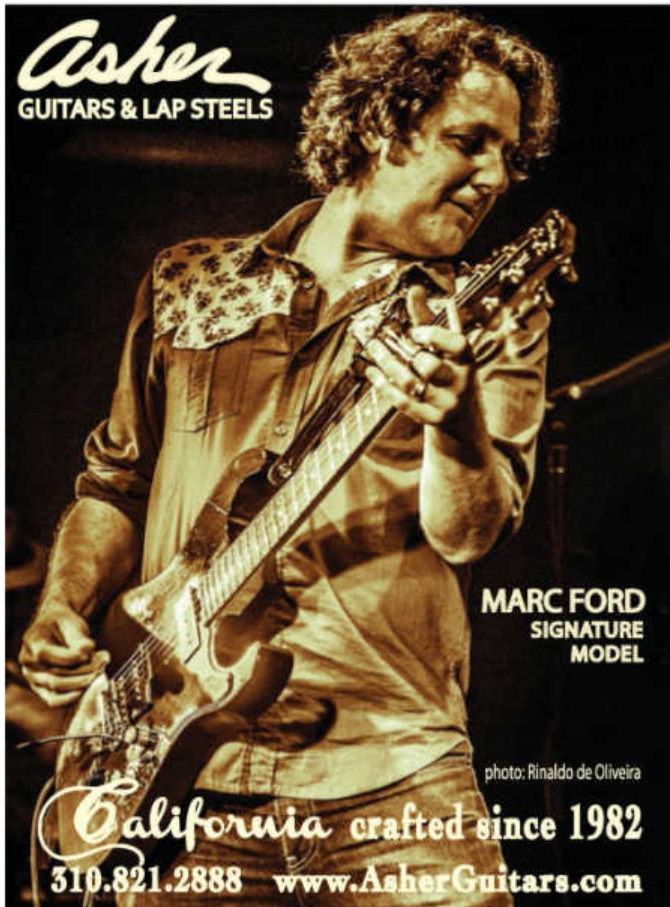

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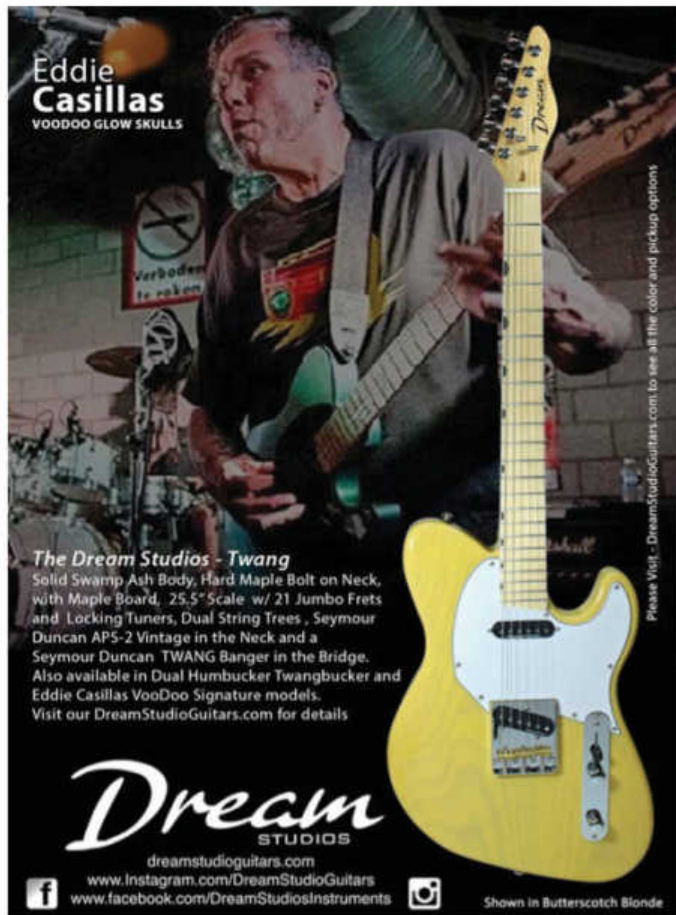
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Features

THE LONNIE JOHNSON-EDDIE LANG DUETS

Continued from page 31

highlighted Carmichael's scat singing. Johnson soloed with aplomb on their other selection, "Blue Blood Blues." This lineup's only recordings, the 78 came out credited to Blind Willie Dunn's Gin Bottle Four.

During the following two weeks, Lang recorded with Bessie Smith and joined Johnson for four guitar duets: "Guitar Blues," "Bullfrog Moan," "A Handful of Riffs," and "Blue Guitars." At their final meeting, on October 9, 1929, they recorded "Deep Minor Rhythm Stomp," "Midnight Call Blues," "Hot Fingers," and "Blue Room Blues." While Lang provided piano-like rhythms and bass, Johnson spun intricate melodies laced with fabulous pull-offs and bluesy bends. Johnson's fast, cascading triplet pull-offs in "A Handful of Riffs" and "Hot Fingers" were utterly brilliant and unlike anything heard before. Lang stepped out as lead soloist during parts of "Blue Guitars," "Midnight Call Blues," and

"Blue Room Blues," while Johnson seamlessly segued into rhythm. The improvisations capture the musicians' warmth, humor, and mutual admiration, and they're as fresh-sounding today as they were on the day they were recorded.

Johnson fondly recalled Eddie Lang in an interview for the 1955 book *Hear Me Talkin' to Ya*: "I well remember Eddie Lang. He was the nicest man I ever worked with. Eddie and I got together many a time in the old OKeh record studios in New York, and we even made many sides together with just two guitars. I valued those records more than anything in the world. But one night not long ago someone stole them from my house. Eddie was a fine man. He never argued. He didn't tell me what to do. He would ask me. Then, if everything was okay, we'd sit down and get to jiving. I've never seen a cat like him since. He could play guitar better than anyone I know. And I've seen plenty in my day. At the time I knew Mr. Lang, I was

working for the Columbia record people in New York. That's all I did—just make sides. But the sides I made with Eddie Lang were my greatest experience."

As one of 1929's top race artists, Johnson went on the road after his final meeting with Eddie Lang, touring with Bessie Smith's *Midnite Steppers* revue. Lang, meanwhile, put in time with the Paul Whiteman Orchestra and played sessions for Jimmy Dorsey, Hoagy Carmichael, Benny Goodman, Ruth Etting, Ethel Waters, and many others. He enjoyed an especially close musical relationship with Bing Crosby.

Eddie Lang died in March 1933 from complications following a tonsillectomy. Lonnie Johnson continued to make records—lots of 'em—through the 1960s. He passed away in Toronto on June 16, 1970.

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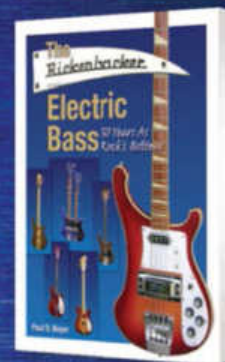
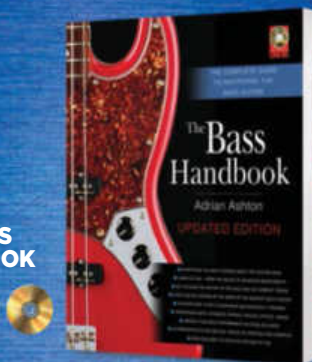
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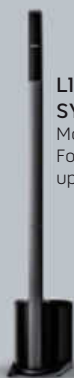
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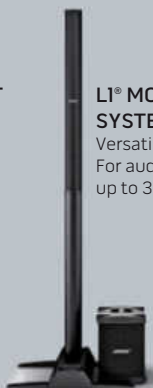
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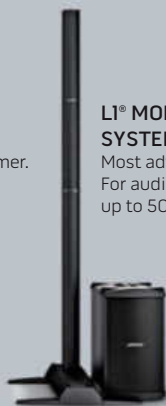
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